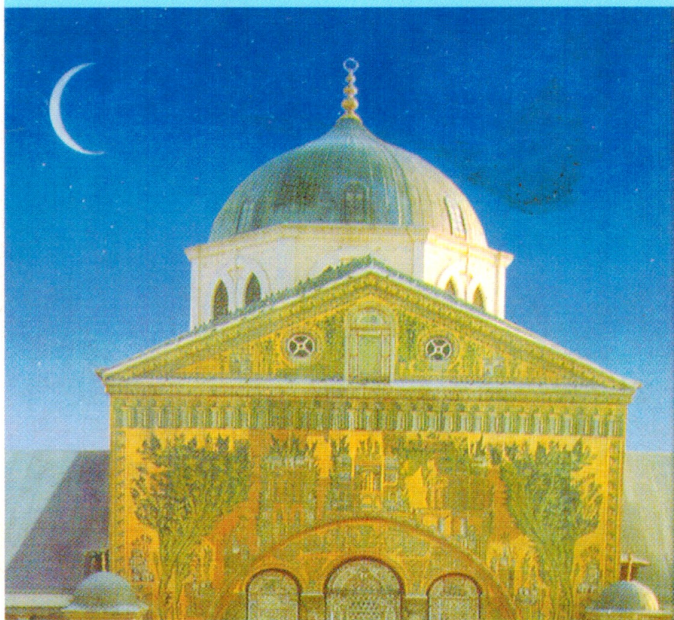


COMPARATIVE RELIGION SERIES – 5/2008

Islam
And the Five Basic
Human Values



By Prof Farida Khanam

**SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
FOR HUMAN VALUES
NEW DELHI**



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The Centre is the end result of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's vision and is a testimony to the relevance of value education in today's society.

The institution is intended to be a global repository for human values, where the study and propagation of such values is carried out transcending the barriers of nations and regions, religions and beliefs, castes and communities. Towards this end, the institution focuses on creating an awareness amongst those whose contribution can make a difference. This spectrum of society includes educationists, bureaucrats, leaders from the corporate world, and so on.

The basic aim of the Centre is to "train the master trainers", to groom *persons of character* in our educational and training systems. By conducting regular workshops for principals, teachers and students of schools, colleges from around the country, outreach programmes for University students, senior Police Officers, Railway Officers, IAS Officers and Armed Forces Officers, the importance of character building is highlighted. In the workshops conducted, the participants have left with the resolve that they in turn would do their bit to enhance the value system in their respective fields.

The Centre has set in motion a movement aimed at making the topic of human values an integral part of the educational curriculum in the country. In this regard the Centre has organised a three day workshop of experts and teachers on 'Integrating Values in Subject Teaching'.

The Centre is also in the process of developing a Human Value Assessment Test-SAHVAT. It is a self analysis tool to measure



oneself on the grounds of Human Values. A workshop of psychologists and other experts was organised for the standardisation of the tool.

The Centre also runs an experimental Primary School in the Open School System for under privileged children. Some very innovative methods of teaching are being tried out here under the guidance of eminent educationists.

The Centre has conducted lectures by eminent personalities aimed at propagating human values. Some of these are: Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, H.H. the Dalai Lama, Dr. Karan Singh, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Dr. Kiran Bedi, Maulana Wahidudin Khan, Swami Bodhananda, Gen. Padmanabhan, Mr. Najam Sethi & Mr. Hussain Khan from Pakistan, Dr. David Frawley from the U.S., Lord Meghnad Desai from UK etc.

The Centre has set up a full-fledged team of research scholars who are working on the following projects:

- Publication of booklets on the five values. Booklets on Truth, Love, Righteous Conduct and Non-Violence have been printed.
- Comprehensive booklets on the values taught by different religions.
- Development of course/study material for workshops catering to different segments of society.
- Integration of value education into the school curriculum.

The Centre has a well-stocked library where the journals, periodicals and books being published by various spiritual organizations are procured and are available for reference and issue. Presently the Library has a collection of about 10,000 publications.

The website of the Centre, www.sai-international.org.in, is regularly updated and it is envisaged that the same will be eventually converted into a virtual university for propagation of Baba's message on Human Values at the global level.

Cover photo taken from "Muhammad: the Ideal Character" by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Goodword Books, New Delhi



PREFACE

One of the tasks before us is the visible demonstration of the old Upanishadic dictum that Truth is one and the sages call it by various names. Baba also says that all religions teach the same fundamental human values of Truth, Righteous Conduct, Love, Non-violence and Peace.

The challenge is to prove these assertions by quoting chapter and verse from the scriptures of the great world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. In order to prove Baba's assertion beyond the possibility of any doubt, we have commissioned learned practitioners of different religions to write about how the five human values are treated in their particular religion.

We are grateful to Prof Farida Khanam for having undertaken this labour of love, for the welfare of humanity in general, as far as Islam is concerned. We hope that this publication will be of use to the practitioners of different religions in this difficult attempt to see the underlying unity among all world faiths.

We can set up the edifice of inter-faith harmony on such publications as these.

We would like to mention that in Quran most of the expressions to mean "man" are gender neutral. The expression is "O human kind". Wherever the words "man" or "him" or "himself" are written, they should be treated as gender neutral.

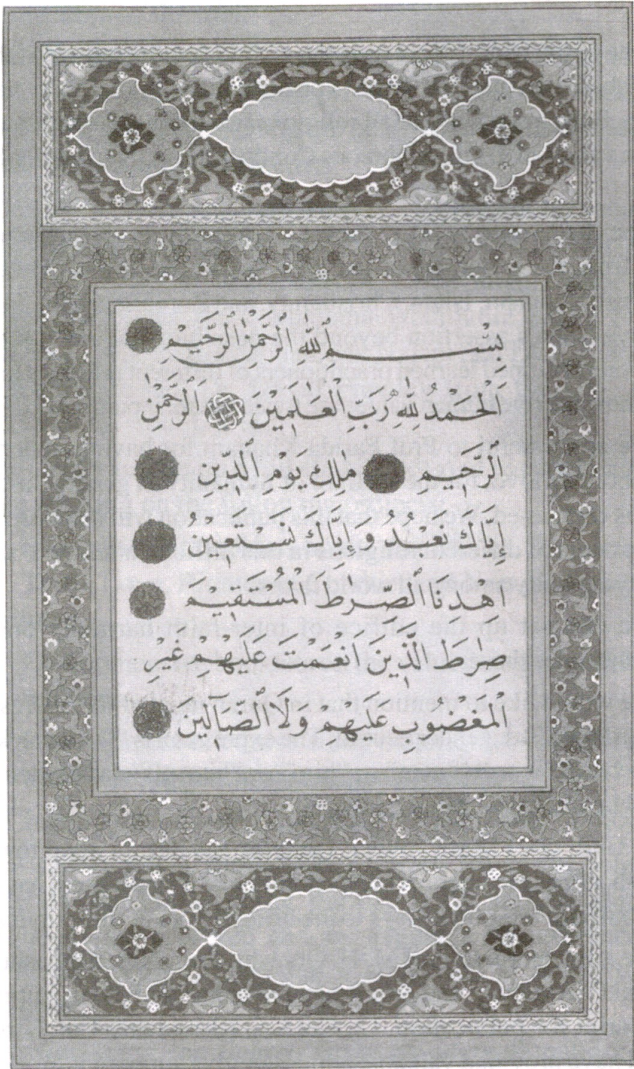
Lt.Gen. (Dr.) M.L.Chibber, Director has been a great tower of strength. Other members of the Committee of Management have also contributed in their own ways to the bringing out of this publication.

We are grateful to Prof M. H. Qureshi, Prof. N.K.Ambasht, Shri Indranil Chowdhury and Smt Progya Shankar for help in editing the manuscript for publication. Lt. Col.G.C.Khosla and Col. Virendra Prasad have provided valuable administrative support.

(M.K.Kaw)

Dean

September 2008



**The First Sura in a Quranic manuscript
by Hattat Aziz Efendi**



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**The name “Muhammad” in traditional Thuluth
calligraphy by Hattat Aziz Efendi**



INTRODUCTION

For some time now, we have been thinking of taking out a book on **Islam and Human Values** with Sai International Centre for Human Values.

A book like this is important to clear the misconceptions about Islam that have been emerging for many years. So much so that people have started thinking that Islam and Human Values are not synonymous.

I have planned my book keeping in view this most urgent, present day requirement. I want to present a book which is not just a repetition of the books already written, but one whose aim would be to fulfil modern intellectual requirements, bringing out the importance of Human Values in Islam.

In present times, owing to certain global concerns, the propensity to study Islam has greatly increased. All over the world, curiosity has been aroused as to what exactly is meant by Islam.

What is urgently needed, therefore, is an objective, in-depth study of Islam—one which presents Islam as it actually is, uncompromisingly and without bias. It is in order to meet this need—in particular, to show how Islam can meet the challenge of violence—that I have undertaken the venture of presenting Islam as it is in the light of Prophet's life and teachings.

Farida Khanam



Chapter 1

ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

With an area of 1,20,000 square miles the land of Arabia is one of the largest peninsulas in the world. It has the Red Sea to the West, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the south-east and the rivers Euphrates and Tigris and the Persian Gulf to the north-east. It thus occupies a unique position. It is situated in Asia, yet only the narrow Red Sea divides it from Africa and by just passing through the Suez Canal, one reaches the Mediterranean Sea and Europe. It is thus at the centre of three continents, yet it is apart from all of them. Arabia is a very hot and dry country with one third of it as desert. Yemen, the original home of the Semites, is the only exception, in that it is fertile and enjoys a rainy season. The camel, the only means of transportation is indispensable, for a desert life demands continuous movement. The desert dwellers must continually go in search of pastures, which are scarce and thin, and soon cropped bare. Yemen has always been very developed in terms of agriculture. Showing great intelligence the Yemenis invented ways of saving rain water from running down to the sea so that artificial irrigation could be carried out. Moreover, they built the famous dam of Maarib by changing the natural course of the water. This water is gathered in a 400 meter wide valley between two mountains by constructing a dam with gates at the narrowest point in the valley.

Then this water is divided into many streams and spread over a wide area of plains. It is almost like the Nile in the dam area in Upper Egypt. In this way they have contrived to have a controlled distribution of their water. The fertility of their land has gone on increasing and the people of Yemen have become very prosperous.

Makkah

When Hajira's infant son started crying for water she ran desperately between the hills of Safa and Marwah in search of water. She ran seven times when finally she discovered a spring of water gushing from the ground by the side of her son. It was this spring which is known as Zamzam. Makkah is founded at this spring spot of Zamzam.

Situated in a valley, Makkah is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is a desert, with no vegetation, no date-palms.

Both Makkah and Madinah were, and still are, islands in a sea of desert. These towns were initially inhabited by the descendants of the nomads, who still retain many of the desert born habits of their ancestors.

There are some fertile spots in the desert, which are called oases. There



are also springs of water here and there, although grass and palm trees grow. These springs of water are scattered all over the desert. Large as well as small clans settle around the oases.

Makkah since ancient times was an important centre for the caravans coming from the south with valuable merchandise. They brought gold, precious stones and spices from Africa to Yemen. From here it was taken to the markets of Syria, Egypt and many other places on the backs of camels. The merchants travelled in caravans for the sake of safety.

Makkah thrived on commerce. It became an important trading centre because of the Sanctuary – the Kabah, to visit which people came from places far and near. Its geographical position was very good from the point of view of trade, being situated at the crossroads of the routes from Yemen to Syria and Abyssinia to Arabia. So the nomads came to Makkah from all sides. By the 6th century, Arab traders had become very influential and controlled the trade from Yemen to Syria. Taif was also an important commercial centre but Makkah was more important because of the Kabah.

So Makkah became a religious as well as a financial centre. By the time the Prophet conquered Makkah, we find many influential traders there, who were adept at doing business with different parts of the world. Although Yemen was the most advanced province in the Arabian Peninsula because of its water resources and sound administration, Makkah being a religious centre wielded greater influence on this account. Makkah, a focal point of pilgrimage dating back to the origin of Arab history, owed its status to the Kabah, which had been built by Ibrahim and Ismail.

The Arabs of the North are considered *Arab al mustaribah*, “Arabized Arabs.” The *Qahtanis* of the South are considered *Arab al Mutaarribah*, or tribes resulting from mixing with the *Arab al Aribah*, original. From the *Qahtanis* descend the Arabs of ancient South Arabia, or “Himyarite” Kingdoms. The completely “true Arabs”, descendants of Aram, son of Shem, son of Noah, are called the *Arab al baidah*, “the lost Arabs”, their identity having been submerged in that of other peoples.

The progeny of Ismail were known as *Mustariba*, or naturalised Arabs. They were divided into many tribes and clans. The *Quraysh*, were the largest tribe, descending from the Kinanah and Ismail and had several clans. They were settled in Makkah by an ancestor of renown called Qusayy, who displaced the previous inhabitants, the Khuzaah. The clans who lived in the vicinity of the Kabah were considered most honourable. These were called *Quraysh al Bitah* (the Quraysh of the Hollow).

The location of Makkah on important caravan routes across the Peninsula, and the prestige of the Kabah in the age of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) gave it great advantages as a trading city. This is why the Quraysh became one of the richest and most powerful tribes. This, together with their descent from the Kinanah and Ismail, gave them claims to an aristocratic pre-eminence.



The Prophet Muhammad was of the Banu Hashim clan of the Quraysh, who lived in the vicinity of the Kabah and enjoyed great honour and prestige in Arabia. These clans were divided into families. Besides the Arabs there were also Christians and Jews who lived in Arabia. A large number of their population lived in Madinah.

In Arabia there are two different geographical types of soil markedly different from one another – the oasis and the desert. The inhabitants of Arabia naturally fall into two main groups: nomadic and settled people. The city dwellers settled in one place and lived on cultivation because they knew how to till the land and grow corn. They engaged in commerce not only within their own country, but also abroad. But the Bedouins, being nomads, disliked the idea of a settled life and wandered from place to place with their families and belongings. Prof. Hitti in his book the *History of the Arabs*, writes: "The Bedouin is no gypsy roaming aimlessly for the sake of roaming. He represents the best adaptation of human life to desert conditions." (p. 23)

They lived in tents and possessed goats, camels and horses. They were continually on the move in search of pastures. They engaged for economic reasons in horse-breeding, hunting, camel raising, etc. They thought that these were the only occupations worthy of a man. They disliked agriculture, trade and commerce. In the desert the basic unit of life is not the state but the tribe. The Bedouins attach the greatest importance to total freedom for the individual as well as the tribe, which was not the case with the city-dwellers. They attached importance not only to freedom but also to peace, security and prosperity. Another feature of tribal life is the belief in absolute equality. All the members of the tribe are treated equally. This is because of the influence of the desert, with the freedom of its vast limitless expanses. If they had any injustice forced upon them, which they could not bear or confront, they left behind their pasture and moved on to another place where there would be no injustice—only freedom and equality. In times of conflict, they depended upon the sword. It was considered as a prerequisite for the individual to be able to defend himself and his tribe.

The nomadic life is based upon stockbreeding, especially the breeding of camels. There is some rain in the winter season and then some vegetation comes up in the low-lying areas. These areas become a paradise for camels, as they provide the best pasture, but with the coming of summer the pasture vanishes. Then the nomads move on in search of other green areas in order to feed themselves as well as their camels. Then there are some wells, which provide water for the camels. The milk of the camels is the diet of the nomads along with dates, which are obtained from the oases. Cereals are not easily available. Only the rich can afford them. The oases that are found in Madinah are near the mountains, where the date crop is grown. And in Taif, which has very fertile soil, cereals are grown. Madinah has the largest oasis.

Ibrahim was the first to teach them the worship of one God. The Arabs followed the religion of Ibrahim for some generations, but their later generations



tended to deviate from the straight path shown to them by Ibrahim and became idol worshippers. At the time of the birth of the Prophet, the whole of Arabia had taken to idol worship. Some of the tribes worshipped stars and planets, some stone idols, and, thus the Kabah, which had been built for the worship of God became a centre of idol worship. It housed 360 idols. Hubal was the most honoured. Carved in red stone, it held seven arrows in its hand.

The Characteristics of the Arab People

Islam emerged in a region known as Hijaz, inhabited by the descendants of Ismael and Banu Kinanah. These people had access only to limited resources, limited habitable area, cattle, pasture and oases. Everything was in short supply. So they could afford to lead only an extremely simple life.

Due to these constraints they often waged war, sometimes to take possession of the limited reservoirs of water and pastures. Nevertheless, these Bedouins had noble human qualities. For they lived very far from the artificial world of civilization. Nature served as a vast school for them. They never led the artificial life of the cities and their life was devoid of all formalities. This extremely simple, austere life made them realists.

All this was responsible for producing in them the qualities which the Arabs call *al muruwah*, manliness, which meant to them acknowledging the truth, speaking nothing but the truth, fulfilling promises, honouring obligations, supporting the oppressed, boldness, noble character, patience, generosity and hospitality. When this high level of humanity was combined with the truth of Islam, they were enabled to perform great feats. It was this truth which has been thus expressed in a hadith:

“Those who were good people in the days of ignorance will also be good people during Islam.”

In ancient Arabia despite their battles, wars, conflicts and tensions and their vows of revenge, which went on for generation after generation, their mentality, their thinking, their aptitude for acknowledging the truth were fully preserved.

For instance, once in ancient Makkah two groups were ready to fight. At this juncture, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb intervened and said to them: “If you waged a war so many people would be killed belonging to both the groups. So should I not tell you something better?” They agreed with him. Then Abu Sufyan said: “What has passed has passed, now you must make peace.” Both the parties accepted his advice there and then and made peace. This was in spite of the fact that there were people who used to go on fighting for as long as even 50 years to avenge a murder or an insult or any injustice done to them.

Due to the paucity of economic resources, there were people who indulged in looting. But even these people were of a noble character. Once a Bedouin wanted to rob a woman who was all alone in her tent decked with jewellery. But he did not enter the tent. He stood at the door and commanded her to



take off all her jewellery and hand it over to him.

While the woman was taking off her jewellery, the man stood at the door with his back towards it, so that he did not catch sight of the woman while she was taking off her jewellery.

These Arabs had not been idol worshippers since ancient times. Idolatry was only a later introduction into their lives through foreign influence. The idols were imported into Arabia. So there was no ideology behind this idol worship. It was thus of a superficial nature, having no deep ideological or philosophical root. For instance, once an Arab wanted to take revenge for his father. So he went to an idol called Dhul Khalasa for divining arrows. But the answer that came from the idol was not in the affirmative. This enraged the Arab and, addressing the idol, he uttered these words: "O Dhul Khalasa, had your father been killed you would never have uttered this falsehood that the oppressor should not be punished."

Similarly, another Arab led his camels to his idol Sad in order to seek its blessing. It was a tall idol, and was covered in blood due to the sacrifices made to it. On seeing this sight, the camels were frightened and ran away. When the Arab saw the flight of his camels, he hit the idol with a stone, abusing him:

"May God destroy you. I had come to seek your blessings and you made my camels run away."

Of these ancient Arabs there were a sizeable number who were known as Hanif. These people were truth seekers and they shunned idolatry. They lived an aloof, social life. They used to say:

"O, God, I do not know how You should be worshipped. Had I known, I would have certainly worshipped you in that manner."

These circumstances of the ancient Arabs and their moral qualities had a close affinity with Islam. These people true in nature, were as if potential converts of Islam. Therefore when the Prophet of Islam began his preaching in 610, these Hanifs took no time in responding to his call and became his devoted companions, Abu Bakr ibn Abi Qahafa being one of those Hanafa. What distinguished the Arabs from others was that they could not afford to reject a truth when it had become clear to them. That is why in the initial stage of the Prophet's call, due to some misunderstanding, a number of them turned against the Prophet Muhammad. But when finally they learned that what the Prophet was telling them was nothing but the truth, they took no time in entering the fold of Islam. There are a number of incidents in the books of Seerah to this effect.

Thus the sending of the Final Prophet was not without reason. It was a well-planned decision of God which He in His Own knowledge decreed. These Arabs were the living people who were selected by God to lend full support to His final Prophet, so that he might fulfil the divine mission.



Chapter 2

THE COMING OF THE PROPHET

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, was born in Makkah in 570 A.D. in the tribe of Quraysh and died at the age of 63 in 632 A.D. in Madinah. Makkah was then inhabited mainly by the tribe of Quraysh. In those times, this tribe enjoyed great prestige all over Arabia and the neighbouring countries, for Makkah was a flourishing trade and religious centre.

Muhammad was still in his mother's womb when his father, Abdullah, died. After his birth, Aminah, his mother, sent the baby to Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather, who was in Kabah at that time. The grandfather was overjoyed at the news, for he loved Abdullah, Muhammad's father, very much. The grandfather gave him the name "Muhammad", meaning "the praised one." As was the practice of the Makkan nobility, he was handed over to a nurse, Halimah al-Sadiyya, a lady of Banu Sad tribe, who brought the Prophet up by feeding her milk.

Halimah nursed Muhammad for two years and a few months. She said that when he stayed with them, her family received all kinds of unaccustomed blessings. Having nursed so many children before, she noticed something 'different' or 'extraordinary' about the infant Muhammad. These observations are recorded in detail by some biographers such as Al-Waqidi, Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham.

After the child had been weaned, Halimah brought him back to his mother. But Makkah at that time was stricken with an epidemic, so Aminah asked her to take him back to live in the pure air of the desert.

Thus, Muhammad remained in the charge of Halimah until the age of five. He learned Arabic in its purest form from this tribe. Muhammad used to tell his companions, "I am the most Arab among you, for I am of the tribe of Quraysh and I have been brought up among the tribe of Banu Sad bin Bakr.

Muhammad returned to his mother after five years of desert life. Then Aminah took him to Madinah to meet her uncles, the Banu al-Najjar. She was accompanied by Umm Ayman, her servant, on that trip. After a stay of a month in Yathrib, Aminah was on her way back to Makkah, when passing through a village called Abwah, she fell ill and died there. She was buried in Abwah. It fell to Umm Ayman to bring Muhammad back to Makkah.

Therefore, the orphan Muhammad was taken care of by his grandfather Abdul Muttalib, chief of the clan of Banu Hashim. He looked after him with great affection. Abdul Muttalib died when Muhammad was eight years old.

Now the guardianship of Muhammad passed to Abu Talib, his uncle,



who was a merchant.

Ibn Ishaq writes, "Muhammad entered his adulthood as if God Himself was protecting him from the widespread evils of the period of ignorance." By this time he was well-known in Makkah for his good morals, gentle disposition and sincerity. In fact, he was called Al-Amin (trustworthy) and As-Sadiq (truthful) by his compatriots.

When Muhammad was twenty-five, a rich 40-year old widow, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid of the Quraysh tribe, entrusted him with the management of her business. She used to employ men to engage in trading on her behalf, and rewarded them with a share of the profits. Muhammad was so honest in all his dealings that she was deeply impressed by his virtues and expressed her desire to marry him. After consultations with his uncle, Muhammad accepted the proposal of marriage. Khadijah became his first wife and during her lifetime he had no other wife. With the exception of Ibrahim, who died in infancy, all his children were born to Khadijah. All his sons died in infancy. Of the daughters, Ruqaiyyah, Zaynab, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah lived long enough to accept Islam and migrate to Madinah with the Prophet.

Ibn Hisham has rightly concluded that:

"The Messenger of God entered his adulthood as if God was protecting and watching over him. And He kept him safe from the evils of the time because He wanted to confer on him honour and prophethood. Thus he reached a position of supremacy over all the men of his tribe. Of all of them, he was the best behaved. He was the noblest among them by his lineage and was the best neighbour. He was unparalleled in forbearance. He was honest in what he said, and the most trustworthy. He refrained from misconduct. Ultimately, he began to be called Al-Amin (the trustworthy) in Makkah."

(Sirat Ibn Hisham)

With his marriage with the wealthy Khadijah, Muhammad had access to all her wealth and property, he could expand his business as much as he desired. He had every opportunity to lead a successful and comfortable life. But with the passing of years he became less and less interested in business and devoted more and more of his time to the search of truth by means of reflection and meditation. Instead of trying to establish himself in his society he took to the desert. He would often go to Mount Hira, three miles from Makkah. He stayed there in the cave lost in thoughts for hours. When his supply of food and water were exhausted, he returned home for provisions and went back to the solitude of nature for prayer and meditation. He sought answers to the mysteries of life. What is man's true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, as His servants? From where man comes and where will he go after death? It was to find answers to these perplexing questions that he betook himself to the stillness of the desert. With all these questions in mind, worldly gain and loss, comfort and distress did not concern him.



He urgently wanted the answer to these important questions of truth. For nothing less than the truth could satisfy his soul. This phase of Muhammad's life is referred to in the Quran in this verse.

"Did He not find you wandering and guide you?" (93:7).

He spent the whole of the month of Ramadan in the Cave of Hira. Finally after spending six long months in the cave, God turned in mercy to His Prophet, to guide him to the path of truth. At the age of 40, on February 12, 610 A.D., the Prophet was sitting all alone in the Cave. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, bringing the first message from God. These words form part of the beginning of the ninety sixth chapter of the Quran. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded. God granted him guidance and chose him as His Prophet.

The angel said to him "Read."

The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."

Then Muhammad felt that his body was being squeezed hard. Then the angel released him and repeated the same command. Again Muhammad replied that he did not know how to recite. Then the angel again squeezed him and then released him for the third time and said: Read!"

Then a change came over him and he was able to repeat the divine words. Then Gabriel revealed to him the chapter Al-Alaq.

"Recite in the name of your Lord, who created; who created man from a clot of blood; Recite, and your Lord is the most Gracious. It is He who has taught man by the pen that which he did not know." (96:1-5)

Muhammad recited these verses repeating them after the angel. Then he found that these words were written on his heart (*Ibn Ishaq*).

The Prophet trembled in fear of what he had seen and heard in the cave. The revelation was a totally new experience for him. He set off for his house immediately after the disappearance of the angel.

On reaching home the Prophet asked Khadijah to wrap him in blankets. He was shivering from high fever. When he calmed down, he related the whole incident to her.

Khadijah, being very kind and understanding tried her best to assure him. She said:

"By Him who dominates Khadijah's soul, I pray and I hope that you will be the Prophet of this nation. By God, He will not let you down. You are kind to your relations. You speak the truth, you help the poor and bear their burden, you honour guests and help those in distress. Surely God will never let you fail."

www.ummah.net/what-is-islam/hajj.htm

Khadijah then suggested that they should go and consult her cousin



Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who had become a Christian hermit.

Waraqa heard the whole account from Muhammad and said:

"I am sure the angel that descended on Moses has descended on you. You will be abused, and you will be pursued. I wish I could be alive to give you my support when your people will turn you out."

(Bukhari), www.alislam.org/library/books/Life-of-Muhammad.pdf

"Will they turn me out?" The Prophet found this difficult to believe. Waraqā replied that people have always turned against those who are recipients of God's messages.

The Prophet's wife Khadijah was the first convert to Islam. When the news of Muhammad's prophethood reached a freed slave, Zayd who was 30 years of age, and his cousin Ali, who was about eleven, both declared their faith in Islam. Abu Bakr, the Prophet's friend from childhood, was out of town. On his return he heard of the new experience of the Prophet. People said to him that his friend had taken leave of his senses, believing that angels brought him messages from God. But Abu Bakr trusted the Prophet completely. Not for one moment did he doubt his veracity and without hesitation he professed his faith.

This small group of the Faithful was the first believer of Islam. In the first stage, the Prophet was asked to spread the message of Islam quietly to avoid arousing any hostility. Abu Bakr, being an influential merchant, was able to bring some of his friends, also rich merchants, into the fold of Islam. But the majority of the conversions took place among the weak and the poor.

In the second stage the Prophet received the command from God to spread the message publicly, but first to his own kin.

According to Arab custom, people used to ascend a hill when they had to announce some important news. So the Prophet, with his all-important tidings, climbed up on a hillock called Safa, situated near the Kabah. He then called out to the people, who all gathered around him. Then he addressed them thus: "If I tell you that a big army is hiding behind that mountain and is ready to attack you, will you believe me?" They all chorused, "Of course, we will, for we trust you. We know you always tell the truth." Then the Prophet said:

"God has commanded me to warn you, my kinsmen, that you should worship none but the one and only God. If you fail to do so, you will invite God's wrath. And I will not be able to do anything to help you, even though you are my kinsmen."

(12.40)

Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, became very angry and said:

"Woe to you on this day! Did you assemble us for this?"



Some remarked that he had gone mad. Soon they all dispersed without caring to give any thought to the words of the Prophet.

The Quraysh who enjoyed the Makkian leadership considered the teachings of the new religion an insult to the religion of their forefathers. In Islam they saw a danger to their own leadership. Such leaders as Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab were the most hostile to the Prophet.

The chiefs of different clans gathered to discuss this matter. They all came to Abu Talib to tell him to stop Muhammad from spreading his message.

They warned him, "Tell Muhammad to stop spreading his message or you will abandon him. If you fail to do so, you should be ready to suffer for the deeds of your nephew."

Abu Talib, an old man, felt that he would not be able to resist their wrath. So he told Muhammad what the Quraysh chiefs had said to him and then added, "My dearest nephew, look to your own safety, and to the safety of your uncle, and do not cause me to carry a burden I cannot bear."

The Prophet decided to discharge his duty whatever the cost. In a firm and calm voice, and with tears in his eyes, he said:

"O uncle! By God Almighty, I swear that even if they were to place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, I would not give up my mission. I must go on carrying it out until I die."

(Ibn Hashim)

Abu Talib, touched by the sincerity and force of the words uttered by his nephew, remained motionless for a while. Then he turned to the Prophet and said:

"My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people turn against me. I am with you. No one shall harm you as long as I live."

(Ibn Hashim, www.islamweb.net)

Opposition Intensified

When the Quraysh saw that the pressure on Abu Talib had failed, they decided to make life unbearable for the Prophet and his followers. Slaves, the weakest sections of the society, were the worst sufferers. Their masters beat them brutally and some of them were beaten to death. But they suffered all this patiently. Abu Bakr spent much of his wealth on freeing these slaves.

Even the wealthy Muslims were not spared. They were also persecuted. Their own relatives turned against them. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah, people were emboldened to persecute the Prophet.

The Makkans did all that they could to turn people away from the Prophet. But in spite of all their efforts Islam continued to spread. Some of the powerful men of Makkah accepted Islam. Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who was famous for his bravery, and Abu Dharr Ghifari



were among them.

The Makkan chiefs were more enraged than before. They made life so difficult for the Muslims that a number of them migrated to Abyssinia (Ethiopia), an area nearby, with the Prophet's permission.

Day by day, the situation worsened. So the Prophet decided to go to Taif, a neighbouring town, 40 miles from Makkah to spread the teachings of Islam. He was accompanied only by his servant Addas. He spoke to the leaders of the town and invited them to accept Islam. They paid no heed to his message. When the Prophet was leaving the town in a dejected state, he was chased by street urchins instigated by these chiefs. They abused him and threw stones at him as he walked out of town. He was badly hurt, bleeding profusely. Yet he only prayed for their guidance. He did not curse them. In all humility he addressed God in these words.

"Lord! Forgive these people, for they know not what they do."

(www.dremali.com/articles/currnt/who-is-prophet-muhammad.html)

Islam spreads to Yathrib (Madinah)

Now the Muslims began to emigrate to Yathrib in large numbers to escape persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. Only the Prophet, Abu Bakr and a few Muslims were left in Makkah.

This infuriated the Quraysh for Islam was now strengthening its roots in Yathrib. The Prophet left for Yathrib.

After six days' journey, the Prophet reached Quba, a village three miles from Madinah. At that time the people of Madinah had been waiting impatiently for his arrival. The Prophet stayed for two weeks in Quba, where he built the first mosque of Islam.

He set off for Madinah on a Friday morning.

From the day the Prophet came to Yathrib, it came to be called Madinatun-Nabi or "The City of the Prophet."

The Prophet entered Yathrib on 17th September 622. This year was later designated by Caliph Umar as the first year of the Islamic era (Hijri), for this event was considered to be the most important in the history of Islam.

Brotherhood of Islam

The first problem faced by the Prophet was that of the Makkan refugees. They had neither homes nor money. Most of them had been well to do in Makkah, but they had left everything there. So the first important thing for the Prophet was to settle them in their new surroundings.

The solution to this problem was found in the concept of brotherhood in Islam. The Prophet collected the Muslims and suggested that one Ansari (Madinan) Muslim and one refugee Makkan Muslim should become linked together as two brothers.

They immediately accepted the suggestion of the Prophet. Each Ansari



took one Makkan Muslim as his brother. This bond between the two became even more powerful than a blood relationship. The Ansari gave his Makkan brother half of everything he possessed—house, land, money and other belongings.

Jihad

The Prophet was a man of peace and reconciliation. He urged his companions to ask God for peace. For the Prophet's main task was the communication of the divine message to the people. And an atmosphere of peace and goodwill was essential to perform this duty. But the Quraysh did not allow him to work in peaceful conditions. When they saw that the Muslims were becoming increasingly stronger, they resolved to wage war and crush them altogether.

The Battle of Badr and Uhud

The Quraysh marched to Madinah with a thousand strong army. They camped at Badr, about eighty miles from Madinah. It was the month of Ramadan, 2 A.H. On hearing the news of the enemy camping at Badr, the Prophet marched out of Madinah as the head of an army of 313 Muslims. There were few horses and the Muslims had no armours. The Makkans, on the other hand, were well armed and had 300 horses and 700 camels.

The battle, in which the Makkans had overwhelming numbers, began on Friday the 17th of Ramadan. The fighting lasted only a few hours, during which the Prophet prayed continuously for divine succour. God then sent angels to help the Muslims who emerged victorious. The Quraysh suffered a total rout.

The defeat, however, did not teach the Quraysh a lesson, but further enraged them. Determined to wipe out the blot of this humiliation, they now began preparations for a second attack, on a much bigger scale. They raised an army of more than 3000 warriors and mad to tackle revenge, marched to Madinah led by Abu Sufyan (the ruler of Makkah at that time).

The Battle of Uhud took place in 624 A.D. The enemy numbered 3000 while the Prophet's men numbered only 700. But with God on their side, the Muslims successfully repulsed the attack. The enemy started retreating, leaving behind large quantities of booty. Victory was imminent for the Muslims, when forty archers whom the Prophet had assigned to the hillside to guard the pass, saw the retreating army and thought that if they remained on the hill, they would lose their share of the booty. Therefore, most of them abandoned their posts. This left the way open for a counter attack.

When Khalid bin Walid, still a non-Muslim, saw the pass undefended, he led his men behind the hill and killed the few archers who still stood guard. Then he fell upon the Muslims from the back. Seeing this, the fleeing Quraysh leaders turned back. The Muslims were thrown into utter confusion. The Prophet himself was wounded. But the Muslims stood like a solid wall of stone around the Prophet, and managed to repulse all attacks with



superhuman courage. Many fell dead and several wounded. They had gone to the extent of sacrificing their lives to save the Prophet from the enemy onslaught. Slowly the enemy was beaten back.

The Quraysh lost 14 men, while the Muslims lost 70. Among the dead was Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle. The Prophet grieved over the loss of this brave soul. With deep sorrow the martyrs were buried and the Muslims came back to Madinah.

The Quraysh knew at heart that the Muslims would have emerged victorious, had not the fateful mistake of a few Muslims turned their victory into defeat. So for two years they made no attempt to invade Makkah.

The Battle of the Trench

The enemies and hypocrites had been plotting all this while. They managed to bring together all the opponents of Islam. So they were able to assemble a mighty force of 24,000. In the fifth year of Hijrah, this large army started marching towards Madinah. The Prophet came to know of the Jewish plot to exterminate the Muslims. He consulted his companions. One of them, Salman Farsi, a Persian, suggested that a defensive trench be dug around Madinah. This strategy was used by the Sassanids on such occasions. Three thousand men worked for twenty days to dig it.

The allied forces of 10,000 marched to Madinah under the command of Abu Sufyan. The Madinans numbered only 3,000. The Makkan cavalry were stopped by the trench. However, they had plenty of provisions and supplies; so they decided to lay siege to the city.

On the 27th day of the siege, a cyclone hit Madinah. For three days and nights the storm continued bringing torrential rain.

All the tents were blown away and the provisions became unusable due to the rain. Dissension in the army was gradually growing. Discouraged, the Quraysh abandoned the siege.

Treaty of Hdaybiyyah

The Prophet felt that war was not the solution. Therefore, he adopted another strategy. Guided by a dream, he left for Makkah to perform Umrah accompanied by 1400 companions. He camped at Hdaybiyyah, a short way from Makkah. It was a completely peaceful march. But the Makkan leaders objected to it. They felt that their prestige was damaged by the fact that the very people who had been expelled by them from Makkah should come to the city again and perform the rites of Umrah openly and in such large numbers.

Now the Prophet halted at Hdaybiyyah and began negotiating for peace with the Makkan leaders. The Quraysh finally agreed to sign a peace treaty. However, on the insistence of Makkan negotiator, the Prophet dropped some words and suggested to include a clause in it, specifying that for the next ten years no war would take place between the Muslims and the Makkans. By



the terms of this treaty the Muslims were to go back without performing Umrah at Kabah. They were to come again the following year and stay in Makkah for just three days.

The treaty appeared to be a victory for the Quraysh, for the Prophet had unilaterally accepted all their conditions. But it soon proved to be otherwise. Now there being no danger of war, people were able to mix freely with any tribe they liked. This gave the non-Muslims an opportunity to have a closer look at Islam. During this period of free interaction, Islam became a subject of general discussion. The call of Islam spread rapidly. The Arabs, impressed by the virtues of Islam began to enter its fold in large numbers. Within the next two years the number of Muslims greatly increased.

Call to the World

Now that peace prevailed, the Prophet took full advantage of the opportunities it afforded him. He sent his companions with letters to the rulers and kings the borders of whose kingdoms were contiguous with, or close to Arabia. The companions used to deliver these letters to the rulers of Iran, Byzantium, Abyssinia, Egypt and Syria, amongst others. These letters contained the fundamental teachings of Islam and the rulers were invited to accept Islam.

Some of them, like Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia accepted Islam, while others rejected it, but they accepted the letters graciously and sent presents to the Prophet. Only the Emperor of Iran, Khusro Parvez, tore the Prophet's message apart in his arrogance. He considered it below his dignity to accept such a letter. When the Prophet received this news, he said: "The Emperor of Persia has himself torn his Kingdom into pieces." This prediction came true during the rule of Caliph Umar, when Iran came under Muslim rule.

Fall of Makkah

Two years after the signing of this treaty, it was violated by the Quraysh. The Prophet then announced that the peace agreement had been revoked. Subsequently, on the 10th of Ramadan, he left for Makkah accompanied by 10,000 companions. This march was conducted in complete secrecy. Only when they encamped a few miles from the city did the Makkans come to know of their arrival. The Makkans were taken completely by surprise. Faced with this numerical strength, the Makkans found themselves helpless. Therefore they conceded their defeat without any resistance. Makkah was thus conquered without any armed encounter. The Muslims had strict orders to shed no blood. The Makkans were told that they would be safe if they kept indoors or took refuge in the Kabah or in Abu Sufyan's house.

After the fall of Makkah the Kabah was purified of all the idols which had been placed in it. Then Bilal, the Negro companion of the Prophet, went up on to the roof of the Kabah and gave the call to prayer (*Azan*). Then the companions said the thanksgiving prayer, led by the Prophet.



Pardon for All

The Makkan leaders sat in the compound of the Kabah. They were, without exception, the worst types of criminals. Therefore, even if all of them had been put to death, the punishment would have been fully justified. But the Prophet, being of a noble character, did not take any action against them. He unilaterally declared a general amnesty, saying: "Go, you are all free."

The Makkan idolaters could hardly believe their ears. This generous treatment meted out to the fallen foe won all hearts, including those of the most bitter enemies of Islam. After the conquest of their hearts, they had no choice but to embrace Islam. All the insolent Makkans surrendered and joined the Prophet in his mission as his companions. All opposition had just vanished.

Battle of Hunayn

The fall of Makkah was not taken kindly by all the tribes. The Banu Thaqif and the Hawazin, who lived between Makkah and Taif, were highly perturbed by the developments in Makkah. Sensing the danger to their independence and supremacy, they turned aggressive and collected a huge army. This army was encamped in the valley of Hunayn, to which a narrow pass was the only entrance.

Expert archers hid themselves behind rocky crags. The Prophet arrived with an army of 12,000. The Muslims filed between the narrow rocky walls of the pass, panicked under the sudden heavy rain of arrows from the hidden archers. About 11,000 of the 12,000 strong Muslim army turned and fled, for they were not at all prepared for this sudden attack. But the Prophet and some of his close companions showed no signs of panic, reposing their entire trust in God. God sent His succour as promised. Thus, despite the initial setback, the course of battle was altered. The Muslims won an extraordinary victory. Six thousand members of the Hawazin tribe were taken prisoner. They were proven war criminals. According to the prevailing custom, they should all have been put to death. But the Prophet pardoned them all and set them free without setting any conditions.

This extraordinary and unexpected amnesty impressed these insolent people so much that they all entered the fold of Islam. After the conversion of the Hawazin tribe, the rebel Thaqif tribe of Taif lost courage. Within one month they all surrendered and embraced Islam.

First Hajj under Islam

The first Hajj under Islam took place in the ninth year of Hijrah. The Prophet himself did not lead it but sent Abu Bakr in his place. The ninth year of Hijrah witnessed a rapid spread of Islam. Representatives of tribes inhabiting far off parts of Arabia poured into Madinah. They had a two-fold purpose—to convert to Islam and to establish relations with the newly formed Islamic state. These delegations came in such large numbers that it became



known as the year of delegations. In this way one after another all the tribes of Arabia entered the fold of Islam.

The Farewell Pilgrimage

After having consolidated the power of Islam in Arabia, the Prophet set out to perform Hajjatul wida, his Farewell Pilgrimage. It was the last year of his life. He left Madinah for Makkah accompanied by Madinan Muslims. When the news spread that the Prophet was going to perform the pilgrimage, various tribes living in Arabia began pouring into Makkah.

Therefore when the Prophet of Islam performed his first as well as his last pilgrimage, he was joined by 125,000 Muslims. During this pilgrimage the revelations about the rules of the Hajj were given to him. These are followed by all Muslims to this day.

When the Prophet arrived at Mount Arafat he imparted some teachings to the people present on that occasion. These are preserved in the form of the 'Final Sermon'.

During the Sermon of Arafat the last passage of the Quran was revealed:

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessings upon you; and I have approved Islam as your religion."
(5:4-5)

This proved to be his last visit, which is why it came to be called the "Farewell Pilgrimage." Only three months after his return to Madinah he fell ill and, with the consent of all of his wives, stayed in the house of Aishah. He had fever and headache. He remained ill for about two weeks and breathed his last on 12 Rabiul Awwal 10 A.H. He continued leading prayers till he became too weak to go to the mosque. But before his death he said his last prayer in the Masjid-e-Nabawi and made Abu Bakr, his closest companion, the Imam of this prayer. This was a clear indication that he wanted Abu Bakr to succeed him as the leader of the believers.

The Prophet died in the room attached to the Masjid-e-Nabawi. He was buried in the same place. Later when Abu Bakr and Umar died, they were also buried to the right and left sides of the Prophet.

Hazrat Muhammad announced the message of God that he had heard to the townsmen of Mecca. At that time, people did not give heed to the Divine Declarations. They forced him to leave the place. But, Hazrat Muhammad knew that truth will win and God will prevail. He knew that the insult and injury were only for the body; the *Aathma* can never be hurt.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Chapter 3

THE HUMAN VALUES IN ISLAM

1. The Importance of Learning

The Prophet of Islam said: Every Muslim, man and woman, is duty-bound to acquire learning. This tradition of the Prophet shows the importance of learning in Islam. Learning is necessary for the realization of God. That is why acquisition of learning is held to be a duty for all. Learning increases one's consciousness. Learning is responsible for the breadth and depth of one's thinking, it enables one to understand the deeper realities, to enrich oneself from the experiences of others and to elevate one's intellectual level.

Learning is essential for religious and spiritual development. Setting off the process of intellectual development, it brings maturity to one's thinking. Without learning, one can neither study the sacred books, nor can one be aware of the history of man and the universe. In short, learning brings man from the level of the animals to the level of human beings.

2. The Aptitude for Learning

The second caliph, Umar Faruq, used to learn something from everyone he came in contact with. In other words, the learning process was active in him all the time.

However, this is possible only when one meets others with open minds, when one tries to learn from them instead of always wanting the others to learn from oneself. It is essential for this learning process to continue uninterrupted. The learner should be free of biased thinking, and should not wallow in self-glory. His attitude should be such that he wastes no time in taking in whatever good he receives from anyone, whatever the source. Whenever a mistake is made clear to him, he should immediately rectify it to compensate for his shortcomings.

The role of the recipient in this process of learning is far more important than the role of the giver or teacher. The more he possesses this quality of right thinking, the more he will be successful in learning from others. At every moment, knowledge and inspiration are being showered by God on this world. Man has only to be open-minded enough to receive them.

3. The Treasure-house of Knowledge

The Prophet of Islam said that wisdom is a believer's own lost property. He should accept it wherever he finds it. This tradition expresses the universality of learning. This means that learning belongs to all mankind.

It is a common treasure house. It is not the monopoly of a particular person or group. It can be likened to the sun. Everyone has the right to



receive light from it. Without this concept of the universality of knowledge, the progress of knowledge would just not be possible.

The treasure house of knowledge is so vast that however much it is expanded, its reservoir will never be exhausted. Knowledge is a vast lake which satisfies the thirst of every seeker.

4. Ask Those Who Know

The Quran says if you don't know then ask those who do know. That is, one who is ignorant of facts should seek correct information and thus make himself an aware person.

Generally, people do not like asking others about anything. They think that asking questions means admitting one's ignorance. This is fatal. Asking should rather be regarded like consulting a dictionary or an encyclopaedia.

No one can learn everything on his own. To compensate for the gaps in one's knowledge, one studies books. Similarly, one should develop the habit of asking questions of those who are well-informed. The knower is like a living book for the seeker of knowledge. If no bias comes in the way of reading a book, no such feeling should come in the way of putting questions to one who knows.

Interacting with people, while asking them questions not only increases our knowledge, it also develops human relations.

5. The Process of Thinking

Abu Darda was a companion of the Prophet of Islam. After his death someone asked his wife what Abu Darda's greatest action had been? She replied: "Thinking and learning a lesson." This shows that the greatest action of an individual is reflection on the things around him and learning lessons from them. It is as if the process of intellectual and spiritual development which sets in man in the form of serious reflection and meditation never comes to an end until the time of his death.

6. Modesty

Abdullah ibn Masood, one of the companions of the Prophet of Islam said: When you do not know anything, you should say: "God knows better." This modesty is a must for intellectual development.

Having the courage to say, "I do not know" is not a simple matter. There is a saying in Arabic, "Uttering the words 'I do not know' is the half of knowledge." The awareness of a man's ignorance awakens the spirit of enquiry within him, which ultimately leads him towards gaining knowledge. When one does not know something, one should accept one's ignorance. Accepting one's ignorance is a step towards gaining knowledge. Without such thinking, no one can attain the goal of intellectual development.

7. A Baseless Excuse

According to the Prophet of Islam, "Man is always deterred by two factors: health and time." That is, he always keeps postponing his work on



the pretext of being in bad health or not having the time.

But these factors are never going to be realized. Waiting for good health and sufficient time is of no avail. It will lead him to nothing. One who remains in the grip of what are mere illusions will go on accomplishing nothing until the time comes for him to depart from this world. The wise man is one who does not allow any excuse to become an obstacle. Whenever anything is to be done, instead of keeping it pending, one should do it right away without waiting for an opportune time. Remember, there is no better time to start than right this minute.

8. A Word of Wisdom

Umar Farooq, a senior companion of the Prophet, and the second caliph said, "You should kill the untruth by keeping silence about it." This saying expresses the power of silence. If you too retaliate, untruth is further empowered, but on the contrary, if you adopt the way of silence, then the power of untruth will vanish on its own. Always remember that it takes two hands to clap.

Silence will result in nature's forces coming into play in one's support and enable one to respond to untruth in a far more effective manner.

9. The Action that Lasts

The Prophet of Islam once observed that "the most desirable action in the eyes of God is that which has a lasting value." A real success in this world always takes time to materialize, that is why the best of all actions is the one which is sustainable. The more result-oriented action in this world is one which can be continued generation after generation: it is an action in which one can be engaged all one's life. This is in accordance with the law of nature. It is an action in the real sense of the word. Man ought to plan his actions even before starting out upon them. He should review all related matters. His capability, his available resources, and all circumstances should be fully taken into account, and then adhering to well thought plans, he should start working on them. And once he has started, he should never abandon his undertakings in the middle. That is the only way to success in this world.

10. Purposeful Life

The Prophet of Islam observed: "One sign of a believer is that he leaves what is of no use to him." This saying of the Prophet tells us what kind of life a purposeful man should lead. The truth is that there is so much to be done in this world and the human life span is so short. In such a situation it is necessary that one should be selective in one's activities.

The believer should engage himself only in those things which are related directly to life's goal. Things which are not related to this goal should be totally avoided. He should learn to differentiate between futile and fruitful tasks. A futile task is one which is simply for amusement and passing the



time, from which nothing is to be gained except for temporary entertainment. The truth is that engaging oneself in such meaningless, fruitless activities is a luxury which a man with a purpose cannot afford.

11. Reciprocity

The Quran tells us that the system of this world is based on reciprocity. That is, one who benefits others will also be benefited by others. It is in giving that we receive. According to this principle, whenever one experiences some deprivation, he should accept that that has happened only because he could not prove himself to be a giver. He had deprived others, so others too deprived him. Had he given to others he would certainly have received from them. This principle of reciprocity relates to all of human life: to the family and society, and to national as well as international life. This principle is at work in all matters, individual as well as social. Accordingly, the way of complaint and protest is totally meaningless. In this world all complaints and all protests actually are directed against one's own shortcomings.

Man ought to refrain from making complaints and protests. In the very first instance, he should try to remove his shortcomings and make himself of benefit to others. This is the only solution to this problem.

12. Success Comes with Patience

The Prophet of Islam once observed, "You must know that success lies in patience." Being over-hasty is the opposite of patience. Activities indulged in hastily are without planning, while an activity patiently carried out is planned activity. In this world only that activity meets with success which is properly planned in advance.

The Prophet of Islam observed: "You must know that success comes with patience." This tradition underscores the extraordinary importance given to patience. According to it, patience is a ladder to all kinds of progress. In this world, one who exercises patience can never be a failure. The truth is that in this present world everyone undergoes the experience of ups and downs. Everyone experiences unpleasant situations again and again. In such a state of affairs, it often happens that a man loses courage. He suffers from a defeatist mentality. But it is not right to do so. For in this present world the prospects of success are so great that they are never exhausted. Success always follows every failure. The purpose of patience is to save oneself from dispiritedness and wait for the next opportunity. If an individual after the first round of failure gives proof of patience, he will find that another success is lying in wait for him.

13. Looking at Those Who Have Less Than You

The Prophet of Islam once said: "Do not set your gaze, in worldly matters, on those who have more than you. Instead look at those who have less than you. In this way you will never undervalue the blessings of God granted to you."



The system of this world has been designed by God in a way that some have more and some have less. Some have gone ahead and some are left behind. In this way, the atmosphere of competition is maintained and it is due to this competition that life's activities continue to go on. It is due to this competition that some are ahead and some are behind. So man ought to look at those who are behind, because this comparison will enable him to value the blessings bestowed upon him by God.

He will become the grateful servant of God. On the contrary, if he looks at those who have gone ahead of him, feelings of hatred and revenge will be produced within him. A positive mentality helps in intellectual and spiritual development, while a negative mentality puts a stop to this. Man must guard himself against depriving himself of intellectual and spiritual development.

14. Principled Behaviour

The Prophet of Islam, addressing his companions, said: "Should I not tell you what is good character?" They said, "Yes, certainly."

Then the Prophet replied that you should join him who cuts asunder from you. You should give to those who deprive you. You should forgive those who oppress you. This can be termed unilateral ethics. But, high moral character does not mean that you should give good treatment only to those who give good treatment to you. That would show a tit for tat mentality. "Do as you would be done by" expresses the principle which should be adhered to.

Principled behaviour is not governed by our reaction to another's action, but is rather governed by a code of ethics. A man should rise above any base attitude displayed by others; he should instead be unilaterally governed by ethics. He should refrain from the psychology of reaction. And in no circumstance should he abandon his positive moral attitude. The greatest sign of a noble character in any individual is that, in spite of a negative reaction from others, he maintains his positive attitude.

15. Good Deeds Nullify Evil Deeds

The Quran tells us that good deeds mitigate evil deeds. This means that if one happens to commit some evil deed, one should follow it up with good deeds. This will nullify the effect of evil. For instance, if someone has abused another, he should utter words of comfort to him, if one has harmed someone then one should do him some good, if one has hurt someone, one should seek his pardon, if one has behaved arrogantly with someone, one should deal with him humbly, and so on. In this way the evil will vanish on its own.

16. Fulfilling one's Obligations

The Quran states: "You will be held accountable to God so far as obligations are concerned." This shows that the matter of obligation is not just between two persons; there is a third party, that is, God.

Such great importance is attached to contracts and agreements that man



must fulfil them. Otherwise he should not enter into any agreement. Failure in this regard is a crime.

Every instance of such abrogation is akin to breaking the tradition of honouring trust. The entire system of social justice is based on honouring obligations. If obligations are no longer honoured in society, it will become devoid of justice.

17. Holding a Good Opinion

The Prophet of Islam once said that holding a good opinion about others is a form of worship. This hadith shows that the holding of a good opinion about others is such a great act that it is likened to an act of worship. It is very difficult to hold a good opinion about others. Causes for complaint repeatedly take place, due to which the image of one's fellow men becomes distorted.

In such a situation, forming good opinions is not easy. Only that person can remain normal who can hold a good opinion in spite of complaints and grievances. He should be so broadminded that, even if he hears some scandal about others, he should not believe it.

18. Gratefulness

The Prophet of Islam said that one who is not grateful to man cannot be grateful to God either. The acknowledgement of a good turn done by a human being must be through thanksgiving.

If one is sensitive in this regard, this will find expression not only in the case of God but also in the case of human beings. It is impossible that man should be grateful in one respect and not in another.

Acknowledgement (*Ehsan*) is a praiseworthy human action when it takes the form of thanksgiving (*shukr*). For every human being owes everything to God. That is why he should be grateful to God more than to anyone else.

The sign of this gratefulness should appear in the form of man being grateful to people like himself in his daily life. The absence of this gratefulness towards man is a sure sign of his ungratefulness to God. For gratefulness in one respect and ungratefulness in another cannot go together. Either a man will be grateful to both man and God or he will be grateful to none.

19. A Far Greater Power

The Prophet of Islam has observed that God grants to gentleness what he does not grant to harshness.

These words tell us about a law of nature. That is, this world has been created in such a way that here gentleness and non-violence may yield beneficial results, while harshness and violence may prove to be counter-productive.

A violent reaction may satisfy one's emotions, but it cannot be good for any constructive goal. Such a goal requires sustained effort, which is possible only through non-violent methods.



20. To Remain on Talking Terms

The Prophet of Islam observed : “It is not lawful for a person to stop talking to his brother for more than three days.”

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 73, Number 91)

A quarrel may last for more than three days, which may be excused, but not talking for more than three days is in no way allowed in Islam. For three days are enough for the anger to subside. One can be forgiven for displaying anger but not for egoism. Anger is a natural weakness which arises temporarily but egoism is an evil, an attitude of insolence, and that is why anger is excusable while egoism and insolence are not. One may be excused so far as anger is concerned, but arrogance and insolence are crimes for which there is no justification.

21. Mutual Respect

The Quran says addressing the Prophet: “For you your religion, for me mine. To you be your way and to me mine” (109:6)

This verse shows that when people belonging to different religious denominations live in a society, then the only possible via media is to “follow one and respect all.” This is the sole principle by which to establish peace in a composite society. This world is full of diversities. It is important to appreciate the diversities.

In such a situation the only practicable way of life is that of accommodation. That is, to grant everyone the right of opting for the religion and culture of his own liking. Peaceful dialogue should be held on the subject of differences for an attempt to obliterate differences and homogenise diversities will result only in more serious differences.

22. Religious Respect

During the life of the Prophet there were some Jewish tribes settled in Madinah. One day, the Prophet of Islam saw a funeral procession passing along a street in Madinah. The Prophet of Islam was seated at that time. On seeing the funeral procession, the Prophet stood up in deference. One of his companions said, “O Prophet of God, this is the funeral of a Jew.” The Prophet replied, “Was he not a human being?”

This shows that every human being is worthy of respect, whether he belongs to one religion or another, to one nation or another. On no pretext can this respect be withheld from any human being. The truth is that every individual has been created by one and the same God, therefore, everyone is equally worthy of respect.

23. Friend Hidden in the Enemy

The Quran tells us that if someone appears to be your enemy, do not return enmity for enmity. Rather treat him well: the result of this unilateral good behaviour will be that your enemy will become your dearest friend. This teaching of Islam shows that enmity is not eternal.



The truth is that in every enemy there lies hidden a friendly human being. By unilateral good behaviour you can come to know this friend and you can actualise this potential by converting your enemy into your friend. Unilateral good behaviour awakens one's conscience, and when one's conscience is awakened one cannot afford any other stand but to abandon enmity in favour of friendliness.

24. The Grandeur of Simplicity

The Prophet once observed that simplicity is a part of faith. This shows how great importance is attached to simplicity in Islam. A purposeful person cannot afford to become engaged in accumulating things which will give comfort. Simplicity means to limit one's needs to a minimum, so that one does not unnecessarily become dependent on luxuries. Simplicity is, in fact, a high strategy.

By adopting simplicity, it is possible for man to fully devote his life to realizing his goal. No part of his life is wasted on anything other than his goal. What is most important for the progress of any individual is that his thinking process should go on unhampered. Simplicity is extremely helpful in this intellectual development. Simplicity keeps man free from all unnecessary engagements coming in the way of his goal.

25. Elevating Oneself Through Modesty

The Prophet of Islam once observed: "One who adopts the way of modesty is granted high status by God." This is a law determined by God. Accordingly, the way of modesty opens the door to his intellectual development. Conversely, the way of arrogance leads man to degradation. Modesty has twofold benefits. The modest man receives the benefit of spirituality being awakened in him. High human qualities are produced within him. He becomes a recipient of God's inspiration. He becomes a realistic person, which enables him to look at things objectively. One who is dealt with in all humility is compelled to acknowledge the greatness of the modest person, and, abandoning his attitude of insolence, he is compelled to acknowledge his moral superiority. Modesty is a way of behaving. Man does not have to spend anything, nor does he have to lose anything by modest behaviour. Without losing anything he gains everything. If haughty behaviour is false greatness, modest behaviour is true humanity.

26. Acting Unitedly Brings Blessings

The Prophet of Islam once said that one man's food is sufficient for two and two men's food is sufficient for three. This tradition tells us the benefits of living together and the blessings that come from acting unitedly. The example of food is by way of analogy. This applies to all such situations. If people work together, joining hands with others, they will be able to perform great feats in life. Even small resources will yield great profits. If everybody works separately, he will derive only a limited benefit from his work. If individuals join one another and work unitedly, everyone will receive the



benefits.

27. Equal Treatment to All

The Prophet of Islam once observed that a believer is one who likes for others what he likes for himself. This is a very concise principle of social ethics. Everyone knows what attitude he wants or does not want from others.

He should behave with others as he wants them to behave with him; he should refrain from such behaviour as he does not want to receive from others.

28. Economic Stability

The Prophet of Islam once observed, "When God gives His bounty to someone, he should not abandon it for no good reason, unless he is compelled to do so." According to the teachings of Islam, the matter of provision is related to God, therefore, when one is given a way of providing for oneself, one should thank God and persevere. If he leaves off without any real reason, he will be deprived of God's succour. The secret of success in one's career is perseverance. This hadith gives us a lesson in staying the course in economic spheres. Success is often achieved by working hard for a long period of time. Man must keep his eyes on the future and not the present. In this way he will gain stability and he will certainly reach the stage of success.

This hadith tells us that instead of being discouraged by present circumstances one should set one's gaze on the future.

29. The Secret of Success Lies in Contentment

The Prophet of Islam once said that that person has succeeded who, given provision according to his needs shows contentment. It shows that the secret of success is to be content with what one has received and not pine for what one does not possess. Whenever anyone wants to make a living according to right principles, he can earn as much as suffices his needs. If he is content with that, he will receive benefits in the form of mental peace. Peace is always the result of contentment, which means to show willingness to accept wholeheartedly what one has received and not ask for more. On the contrary, one who does not value what he has received will go on striving for more and more. Such an individual will never be satisfied. For there is no limit to worldly things. However much he has received, there will still be something to tempt him and he will continue to run after it. Ever greedy for more and more, he will lead his life in a state of tension until his last breath.

30. Not Asking Others

The Prophet of Islam said, "Don't ask from others. For the upper hand is better than the lower hand."

(Sahiih Bukhari 2:24:508)

This is a teaching of lofty perception that man should depend upon himself. He should not ask for things from others. Asking is not a simple matter. It is a sign of moral degradation, for one who asks from others wants



to lead his life on easy money. Such a person will have to pay the price in terms of his capabilities and latent potential remaining suppressed.

In the absence of any incentive to work hard, he falls a victim to the weaknesses of an easy life. The proper way to lead one's life is to realize one's potential and make oneself accustomed to working hard. A man should try to stand on his own feet. He should be the giver rather than the taker.

31. Commerce: A Big Source of Provision

The Prophet of Islam once observed that 90% of earnings comes from commerce. This hadith tells us a law of nature.

According to the creation plan, the major part of providing for oneself is rooted in commerce. This tradition is a storehouse of hope for everybody. If someone is not able to find a job or fails to receive a share of an inheritance, he should start up a business and then he will make much more money from that than he would from any other source.

32. Earning by Working Hard

The Prophet of Islam once observed: "God loves His servant who works hard to make a living." This tradition tells us of the importance of working hard for one's living.

Hard earned money is the source of all human virtues. Engaging in hard work is the most lawful way of living. It makes a man a realist. It inculcates in one the thinking of simplicity. It gives one the opportunity to understand others. It saves one from leading too easy a life.

Working hard for one's living is an important way of perfecting one's personality. Even when there is no compulsion one ought to work hard for one's living. It saves one from leading a life of excessive comfort.

33. Placing Curbs on One's Tongue

The Prophet of Islam said that as a matter of etiquette no one should ever speak without thinking. In social life it happens repeatedly that we hear so many things against others.

It is a common experience that whenever someone is quoted, the exact wording is changed to the extent that truth becomes a falsehood. That is why one should never repeat anything just on the basis of hearsay. There is no harm in repeating good news. Good news does not require proper investigation before passing it on.

34. A Compact Advice

The Prophet of Islam once said, "Should I not give you a compact word of advice?"

"Yes, God's Messenger." "You must guard your tongue." Whenever anyone speaks, he should do so after giving serious thought to his words. He should not say anything which is hurtful to others. He should refrain from uttering any such words as may spread evil in society. Keeping control of



one's tongue is to close the door to social evil, while failing to keep control of it opens the door to iniquity. It is a sign of sincerity in a man that he always uses his tongue in a very guarded manner. Misuse of the tongue for a man is to talk evil of others, to hunt for their faults and spread them around in society.

35. Patience and Avoidance

Sabr is an important teaching of Islam. The Quran repeatedly enjoins patience. It further says that you must exercise patience before your Lord. In a similar vein, it is said that remaining patient is for the Lord. Patience sometimes appears to go against a human being. But, in reality, this is in accordance with the creation plan of God. The system of the world has been so designed by God that everyone has been granted freedom. Everyone has an open environment for competition, due to which people often have complaints against one another.

Their interests are harmed by one another. In such a situation staying patient in the face of unpleasant experiences shows willingness to accept the creation plan of God. It is due to the importance of patience that God has said: "Patience is for Me." The Quran declares, "One who remains patient will be given reward beyond measure."

36. Unilateral Tolerance

The Prophet of Islam once said that you must forgive your oppressor. This is a great piece of wisdom. Oppression can be put to an end only by forgiving the oppressor.

Retaliation is not going to end oppression. This saying of the Prophet is a lesson in result-oriented action. An oppressed person must first of all think that his reaction should be aimed at ending the state of oppression rather than worsening his plight. Whenever any oppressed person thinks along these lines, he will find that forgiving the oppressor is the greatest form of revenge. Forgiving the oppressors is the most simple strategy for putting an end to oppression. This is not an act carried out under compulsion. It is based on a fine moral principle. When one forgives the unjust, one should do it as a matter of principle, for, forgiving on compulsion is as meaningless as taking revenge.

37. The Way of Avoidance

The Quran enjoins us to adopt the way of avoidance of friction with the ignorant. It is a very important principle in leading our lives in this present world. It is a truth that just as there are thorns and flowers in the plant kingdom, so do foolish people exist in abundance in the human world. Just as in the plant kingdom one plucks flowers without embroiling oneself in the thorns, similarly in the human world one has to continue one's life's journey without embroiling oneself with foolish people.

No one can succeed by doing so. That is why the wisest course is, that



whenever one confronts a foolish person, one should avoid him and go ahead. No one can obliterate foolish people from the face of the earth. However, it is quite possible for one to continue one's life's journey constructively without having anything to do with them.

One should not be afraid that avoidance will embolden the foolish. For avoidance, far from fanning the flames of contention, will quite finally extinguish them.

38. Showing Willingness to Accept Minor Evil

One companion of the Prophet, Umair ibn Hubaib, said that one who will not tolerate the minor evil of the foolish will have to tolerate the major evil of the foolish.

In this present world, if there are wise people, there are also foolish people. The latter, due to their foolishness, keep inflicting harm on others. This harm, to begin with, has minor consequences. Therefore, the wisest course is to tolerate it. One who embroils himself in this will only provoke the foolish person to inflict major harm. In such a situation it is better to tolerate minor harm in order that major harm may be avoided.

39. No Anger

A man once came to the Prophet of Islam and said: "O Prophet of Islam, give me a word of advice which may improve my entire life." The Prophet said: "Don't be angry." This was, in fact, an extremely concise piece of advice but it conveyed a principle which may solve all matters pertaining to one's entire life. In effect, man always lives in society. He repeatedly undergoes such unpleasant experiences as provoke him and enrage him, and when in a state of anger, the fire of revenge and hatred is ignited within him. He wreaks vengeance on the one who has angered him and then each act of revenge is responded to by another such act. In this way, a series of attacks and counter attacks is set in motion, leading him nowhere but destruction.

If he is to continue his life's journey in such a state of affairs, he must raise himself above such negative feelings. He should respond positively even to negative situations.

40. The Solution to Anger

The Prophet of Islam once observed that whenever anyone was filled with anger, he should sit down if he is standing, and he should become silent if he is speaking. By changing one's condition, the anger can be cooled down.

Anger is a fire which is ignited within man in certain unpleasant situations. If water is available one should wash one's hand and face. Thus, fire will cool down. Anger leads one to destructive ways. It is always harmful to the person concerned.

In such a situation wisdom lies in cooling down anger as soon as it flares up by adopting the proper strategy. A proper strategy can put an end to



anger within minutes.

If anger is not cooled down in time it will cause such harm as can never be compensated for. It is but natural. Anger is a natural sentiment. It is not an evil in itself. Inability to control one's anger is like being defeated by one's own self. And this is no doubt the worst type of defeat.

41. The Greater Feat

The Prophet of Islam once said that a wrestler is not one who can defeat his rival in wrestling, but rather one who can keep himself under control in moments of anger. This is no doubt the highest criterion of one's being strong. Defeating someone in physical combat is no great feat. Even animals can perform such a feat. The greatest sign of an individual being powerful is that he keeps himself fully under control even when angry. In spite of anger, he should not cross the limit of humanity. He should overcome his anger instead of anger overcoming him.

42. Ease in Difficulty

One of the laws of nature has been described in the Quran in these words: "With difficulty there is ease." It does not say that ease follows difficulty, but that with difficulty there is ease. This is an immutable law of nature. The truth is that in this world prospects and opportunities are in much greater abundance than difficulties.

So man should never lose heart. If there is some difficulty or some loss, he should utilize his thinking capacity to solve his problems.

Then he will learn that exactly at the same place and the same time there were a number of new prospects. He can find another chance after losing one, by making use of which he may go ahead in the race of life. The best formula in this present world is to avoid the problems and feed the opportunities. He must try to turn unfavourable circumstances to good account by employing good strategy and better planning. In this way he can convert failure into success. It is always possible in this world of God for man to convert his minus into plus by using his brains. This opportunity exists for everybody who does not lose heart, who remains hopeful even in desperate circumstances.

43. Choosing the Easier Option

The Prophet's wife, Aishah, tells us of a general policy followed by the Prophet. "When he had to choose between two options, he would almost always opt for the easier one." (Al-Bukhari)

This means that whenever the Prophet had to choose between violent and peaceful courses he would always abandon the violent one and opt for the peaceful one. Similarly, whenever he had to choose between avoidance and confrontation, he would always dismiss the option of confrontation and opt for the way of avoidance. Similarly, whenever he had to choose between war and peace, he would always opt for the way of peace.



This is wisdom. Wisdom enables man to save himself from further harm and may successfully set his affairs in order. We find abundant examples of this wisdom in the life of the Prophet of Islam.

44. Good may Lie in Something We Find Unpleasant

The Quran on one occasion enjoins us: "You may dislike something which may be good, and you may like something which may not be good for you." (2:216)

This verse relates to all the affairs of life. People generally judge things by appearances. They may start liking something owing to its apparent attraction. And whatever is apparently unattractive may be rejected by them. This method is not right so far as the actual result is concerned. In such a situation man ought to judge by the deeper realities and not by appearances.

45. One Prayer

One prayer of the Prophet of Islam is thus worded: "O God, show me the truth in the form of truth and grant me the wisdom to follow it. Show me falsehood in the form of falsehood and grant me the wisdom to save myself from it. And show me things as they are."

In this present world the most important thing is that objective thinking should be developed in man. In this world man lives in such circumstances as often make him see truth as falsehood and falsehood as truth.

In this prayer man is praying to his Lord to keep himself away from such deviation and grant him the insight which may enable him to see things as they are. In this world right thinking breeds right action, and right action always leads one to success.

Wherefrom are human values to be derived and how are they to be developed? Human values are born along with human birth. They exist in union. Unfortunately, man today separates himself from human values and yet wants to live as a human being."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Chapter 4

TRUTH

The virtue which is developed naturally in every human being is truthfulness. By his very nature, man is averse to lying, and hates anyone who is proved to have told a plain lie. So long as there is no motive to tell a lie, he is naturally inclined to speak the truth. The Quran sets forth the following injunctions on this subject:

“You, who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, your near relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both.” (4:135)

“Let not hatred towards any person induce you to act unjustly against him.” (5:8)

“Truthful men and truthful women shall be given a rich reward.” (33:35)

“They are beloved and blessed who enjoin truth and patience upon each other.” “God’s love extends also to those who do not give false evidence and who maintain their dignity when listening to profane abuse.” (25:72)

The Quran defines believers as men and women who speak the truth. The noblest qualities in a man or woman are honesty and the determination to avoid falsehood at all times. Indeed, nothing less than absolute truthfulness befits the human character.

Many traditions have been related which show the importance of honesty and truth. For instance, according to one tradition, the Prophet of Islam observed: “You should speak the truth, because speaking the truth leads man to a life of virtue. And you should keep your distance from someone who tells lies, because telling lies leads man to a life of evil.”

This hadith exhorts us to speak the truth and it also tells us the wisdom of speaking the truth. When a man genuinely takes care to speak the truth, he develops a truth-loving personality. The colour of truth dominates his temperament and thinking. A soul is nurtured within him that is free of all the evils of psychological complexes. In this way there is nothing to prevent the basic quality of honesty from shining through on all occasions.

On the contrary, one who, while speaking, utters falsehoods, is sullying his inner self. Purity of soul does not develop within him. He becomes more and more immersed in evil. This is why, according to a hadith, the Prophet observed: ‘The best utterance to me is that of the truth. The trader who is truthful and trustworthy will be raised on Doomsday along with the prophets.’ (Bukhari)



A believer in God is also necessarily a truth-loving person. He always speaks the truth. In all matters he says what is exactly in accordance with reality. A true believer cannot afford to tell lies, or hide facts. What does it mean to speak the truth? It means avoiding any contradiction between man's knowledge of things and the words he utters. For that matter, whatever he says should be what has come to his knowledge. Falsehood, by contrast, is the utterance of statements, which do not tally with reality. Truth is the highest virtue of a believer's character. A believer is a man of principle. And, for such a person, telling the truth is most important. For him no other behaviour is even possible, for he finds it impossible to deny the truth.

The world of God is based wholly on truth. Here everything expresses itself in its real form. The sun and the moon, the rivers, mountains, stars and planets are all based on truth. They appear just as they really are. In this unfathomably vast universe of God, there is nothing that is based on untruth. There is nothing that shows itself in any other form than its real form.

This is the character of nature, which pervades the entire universe. A believer too has exactly the same character. He is totally free from falsehood or double standards. A believer is all truth. His whole existence is moulded upon truth. From the very first, he appears to be a true person both inside and outside.

Speaking the truth is not only a matter of policy for the believer: it is his very religion. Compromising in the matter of truth is not possible for him. He speaks the truth because he knows that not speaking the truth is the negation of his own personality and a commitment to something that is the negation of the self. And this is not possible for any worthy person.

One of the marks of true and honest believers is, according to the Quran, that they "faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants" (23:8). A well-known commentator of the 20th century, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, has briefly explained this: "They do not commit any breach of trust and do not break promises, neither in the matter of God nor in the matter of men." (p. 443)

Everything man has is given to him in trust by God or by man. In this way everyone is bound by certain promises and obligations. Some obligations are entered into by written or spoken agreement, while others are a matter of tacit understanding. Whatever the form of agreement, man has to faithfully fulfill all these trusts and obligations. If he fails to do so, he does not come up to the highest standards of humanity. He is proving himself guilty in the eyes of God.

God's religion has also been given to man as a trust. Therefore, it is necessary for man to fulfil this trust and to act strictly in accord with God's divine commands. The Prophet of Islam was given the title 'Sadiq' (the truthful) and 'Amin' (the trustworthy) by the Meccans even before the advent of Islam as he was honest and trustworthy in absolute terms. Trust entails



the honest discharge of all responsibilities. A ruler must be just to the ruled, a husband must fulfil his duties to his wife, a wife to her husband and her home, a teacher to his pupils, etc. And, if anything is entrusted to anyone, he must protect it and return it to its owner as agreed.

'Trust' is the bedrock of all financial, legal and moral transactions, and it obviously plays a vital role in relations between man and his God on the one hand and between man and his fellow-beings on the other. The fact that a man is expected to give everyone his due, is also a 'trust'. To honour a person's confidence is also a trust. A trust also means to keep to oneself anything told in confidence. To work for a stipulated number of hours is a trust reposed in the worker and is as important as keeping one's word. The trustworthy shall have a place in Paradise. The Prophet said that if a person was not trustworthy, he would not have faith either, that trustworthiness is inherent in man and that he improves through following the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet. But, that if there is a lapse, that quality will go on decreasing till a time will come when there will be nothing left of it in the man's heart.

When a person seeks advice, he gives the facts in trust and they should be treated as such. When something is discussed in a closed door meeting, it should not be divulged outside except to prevent evil, or for a good purpose. A secret is not just a fact or facts communicated in confidence; if the speaker seems not to want to divulge even the discussion of it to anyone else, that too must be treated as secret and must not be spoken of. That which takes place between man and wife is also not to be talked about, firstly, as that would show a lack of modesty, and, secondly, as that would violate a 'trust'. When a man marries a woman, she is a trust from God and must be looked after as such.

Man's body, heart and mind, are all in fact trusts bestowed on man by God. It is, therefore, incumbent upon man to make the best use of these endowments within the limits decreed by God. That is, his hands and feet should move only for the cause of justice, and not for tyranny. His mind should be full only of well-wishing and not of ill-will. Similarly, all the trusts by which he is bound should be discharged to the trustees, whether these trusts are in written or in verbal form. He should never regard another's possessions as his own.

Everyone is bound by obligations, in relation on the one hand to man and on the other to God. According to the Quran, trust of two kinds stems from God. One is the inherent sense of responsibility man is born with; this form of trust is binding upon all human beings born on this earth. Another form of trust is that which arises from faith in God. Only those are bound by this sense of commitment who have embraced God's religion as brought to them by God's messenger: in this sense, the believers are consciously bound in trust. So far as the matter of trust as regards man is concerned, some obligations are incurred from time to time as they arise in particular and are set down in contracts, while others automatically devolve upon individuals, either as family members, or as citizens of the state, living in society. Discharging all these trusts and obligations is



man's duty, in obedience both to his own nature and to the laws enshrined in the Quran and Hadith.

Man is free in this world. God has not placed on him any curbs whatsoever. But the purpose of this freedom is merely to put man to the test. It is not meant to encourage him to lead a life of permissiveness, like the animals, and then, one day, just pass away and disappear from this world. Rather its purpose is that man should—of his own free will—lead a morally upright life, thus demonstrating that he is God's humble servant and that the only way of life that becomes him is a life of obedience.

One who conducts himself in this matter as is expected of him by God, should be reckoned as God's special servant who, without any apparent compulsion, chose to be a man of principle; and who, without being subjected to any external force, of his own free will obeyed his Lord as He would have desired. This liberty accorded to man gives him the opportunity to gain credit for being the most superior of God's creatures.

All the things in this world are God's subjects. The stars and planets rotate in space doing their Lord's bidding. Trees, rivers, mountains, and all other such natural phenomena function according to the unchangeable laws of God laid down by Him at the outset. Similarly, the animals faithfully follow the instincts instilled in their species by the Divine Will. Man is the only creature of God who has been given, exceptionally, the gifts of power and freedom.

Freedom has opened doors of two kinds for man, one leading to obedience and the other to disobedience. If, on receiving freedom, an individual becomes arrogant, insolent and disobedient, it will mean that he has failed to pass the divine test. But if, on the other hand, he feels himself bound by divine principles without any compulsion and he remains modest and humble, obeying his Lord's will on all occasions, he will have made the right use of his God-given freedom. One who chooses this course will succeed in the test of freedom.

Speaking the truth is a form of 'courage'. It is all the more meritorious when truth finds itself in a weak position and falsehood is dominant for purely material reasons. The genuinely truthful do not desist from telling the truth for fear that they may be ridiculed. They may have to face other fears too, for instance, the fear of harm, danger to life and property etc. Islam urges its followers not to be deterred even, in this way. If an individual refrains from doing a good deed for fear of another, that would mean that he fears that other person more than he fears God! It shows a lack of faith to see a wrong being done without raising one's voice against it. Abu Zar Ghefari raised the call of Islam in a gathering of the Qureish after he had accepted Islam; for this he was beaten up thoroughly, yet they could not still his voice of truth. Ultimately he fainted, but he repeated the performance the next day. Many years later, during Uthmaan's caliphate, when the Muslims in Syria had started to accumulate wealth, same Abu Zar raised his voice in protest against this without caring for Amir Muawiya's annoyance. The Prophet once gave a sermon saying, 'Be warned! Let not the fear of anyone keep you from speaking the truth as you know it to be.'



Chapter 5

LOVE

Islam is a religion of love: God's love for man and man's love for God, and man's love for man and the entire creation.

The Quran begins with a prayer which invokes God with His attributes Rahman and Raheem, which means Beneficent and Merciful. These attributes of God connote love, mercy, compassion and blessings. God's love has manifested itself in all His creations; His love (Rahmat) comprehends everything and every being. Here are some verses from the Quran which make this attribute of God clear:

"God is the friend and protector of those who have faith" (3:67)

"Truly, God loves the doer of good." (2:195)

"Truly, God loves those who repent." (2:222)

"Truly, God loves those who put their trust in Him...." (3:158)

The moral laws, laid down for man, are also the product of God's love for man. These laws are aimed at man's spiritual purification.

Islam teaches its followers that, when they meet one another, they should address one another with such words as "May peace and God's blessings be upon you." Even when one sneezes, one should say, "May God be praised," and the others sitting with him will respond, "May God bless you." When the believer enters the mosque, he should say: "May God open the gates of mercy to me." Similarly, when worshippers have concluded their prayer, they are to turn their faces sideways and say: "May God's blessings and peace be upon you."

In this way, on all occasions and at every stage, the phrases of peace and mercy come readily to the lips of the believer. Thinking and speaking in terms of mercy become, in fact, the distinguishing features of the believers. Their whole life is moulded by the demands of mercy and compassion.

The Prophet often uttered such phrases as, "May God bless the man, may God bless the woman." This goes to show what type of attitude Islam wants to develop in its adherents. This is the culture of *rahmat* and love. Islam demands that on all occasions human beings should be well-intentioned towards each other; on all occasions man should offer the gifts of love and compassion to others.

God's attributes are given in the Quran as 'The Compassionate', 'The Merciful'. That is, He is very kind and sympathetic. Similarly, the Prophet of Islam has been called 'A Mercy to the world.' (21: 107). That is, the



Prophet of Islam has been sent as a blessing to the whole world. The greatest distinguishing feature of the Prophet is his being the instrument of universal mercy.

The Quran, as a matter of divine guidance, urges people to exercise compassion in their dealings with one another. This means that everyone should treat others with sympathy and kindness. Even when one experiences unkindness from others, one should not return unkindness for unkindness, but should continue to behave sympathetically. The Quranic verse "And they exhort one another to patience and compassion" means that creatures of God (human beings) ought to be dealt with mercifully.

Of all virtues which are of great personal importance, that of mercy is ranked as the foremost. That is why the Prophet of Islam observes: "God will not show mercy to one who does not show mercy to others." (*Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al- Tawhid*).

We learn of 99 names of the attributes of God from the Quran, some of these being:

<i>Rahman</i>	Most Merciful
<i>Rahim</i>	Most Compassionate
<i>Wadud</i>	Most Loving
<i>As-Salam</i>	Most Peace Loving
<i>Rafiq</i>	Most Gentle
<i>Ghafoor</i>	Most Forgiving
<i>Jameel</i>	Most Beautiful

As these names suggest, God's mercy for His servants is boundless. It follows that His servants should in like manner show mercy and compassion for one another. The hadith endorses this by exhorting all human beings to adopt a divine code of ethics based on love and compassion for fellow human beings.

It is certainly incumbent upon all of the faithful to foster a loving, caring attitude towards others and to recognize that, in showing love and compassion to their fellow men, they are following a course of right action. According to a Hadith, God said: "My mercy prevails over My wrath."

He may reward good deeds and punish the wrongdoer, but there is always scope within His scheme of things to have regard for sincere repentance and to show His divine mercy.

Once the Prophet of Islam saw a woman cooking food over a fire, while holding a baby in her arms. The Prophet asked his companions whether they thought it possible for this woman to throw her baby into the fire. They replied that never could such a thing happen. The Prophet replied that God loved His servants more than this woman loved her child.

God's compassion is so great that no sin is beyond forgiveness. However



much a servant sins, if at any stage before his death he truly repents and seeks God's pardon, all his sins will be forgiven. However, in God's court, it is sincerity which is of prime value, not lip service.

The first verse of the Qur'an: 'In the name of God, the most beneficent, the most merciful,' has been repeated 114 times throughout the text. This shows that Mercy and Compassion are the most important of God's attributes. Besides these 114 times, these words occur at many other places in the Holy Scriptures.

Islam is thus a religion of love and mercy. The Quran itself is a message of love and mercy from the Most Merciful God to His creatures. God Himself is All-Merciful and He desires His servants to live in this world as merciful creatures.

When the Bible says that one must love one's enemies, that is considered to be one of its brightest injunctions. The Holy Quran, while saying that good and evil cannot be equated, emphasizes that doing good to an enemy and seeking refuge in God, are the best demonstrations of patience, and that if such a course is followed, then even the enemy will become friendly. Describing consideration and kindness, the Prophet of Islam said that these do not consist of showing kindness to those who show kindness to you; it really means that you should be kind to those who do the contrary to you. The enemy should be forgiven and treated with kindness and consideration, and attempts should be made to wean him away from evil by doing good to him. There are any number of instances of the Prophet having forgiven those enemies who even sought to kill him and tortured him and treated him with violence. He even forgave a woman who administered poison to him in his food. The conquered Meccans were pardoned en masse and the Prophet prayed for the good of the people of Taif who had driven him violently away from their city. He also forgave the woman who, having had his uncle killed, chewed up the dead man's liver. The Quran enjoins Muslims to honour agreements made with non-believers. When asked to curse those who had ill-treated him, the Prophet replied that he had come to the world as a Mercy towards mankind and not as a curse. He insisted that the Muslims must do full justice, even to the enemies.

If an act of goodness is analysed, it will be seen that, behind it, is a sense of kindness. All acts of cruelty, oppression and heartlessness are the result of a complete lack of a sense of kindness. Of all God's names, the most popular, and most often used, is that of 'Rahmaan' (kind). The name 'Raheem', which comes along with 'Rahmaan', means 'full of kindness'. The Muslims are asked to recite both these names of God before they undertake anything. According to a Hadith, God divided 'Raham' (kindness) into a hundred parts and of these He gave the human beings one part. It is because of this one part that mankind displays kindness. According to a hadith, even a mare does not step on to its foal lest the foal be injured. Kindness is also a great quality given by God to His prophets. The Quran



says of the Prophet Mohammad, 'To you has come a Prophet from amongst yourselves who feels your pain when you are in trouble, who is always mindful of your welfare' and 'who is most considerate and kind to you.' The Quran speaks of the followers of 'Isa and Mohammad as feeling kindness and sympathy for people. According to a hadith, when one person is kind to another, God is kind to him. And, he who is not kind to his young people is not from amongst us.

Islam's message envisages kindness to all living beings, all animals and all human beings; there are specific instructions on how to deal humanely with animals so as not to misuse them. The Prophet said, 'No kindness shall be shown by God on the day of Judgement to one who is not himself kind'. It is the 'sense' of kindness which makes us kind and good towards orphans, the needy, the poor, the oppressed and the underdogs. Blessed, indeed, are those who are kind to others!

The discovery of Islam brings to man the realization that greatness belongs to God alone; it does not belong to him or to anyone else. As a result, modesty, humility, tolerance and politeness are engendered within him. For, it is a condition necessary for adherence to the path of gentle behaviour to have a temperament marked by such virtues as love, kindness, modesty, etc..

As a result of the wrong thinking and misdeeds of others, we are repeatedly faced with unpleasant experiences in this present world. Hence only those can firmly tread the path of love, politeness and gentleness are able to refrain from the psychology of reaction. That is why true believers are described in the Quran as "those who curb their anger and those who forgive their fellow men." (3: 134)

According to a tradition recorded by Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet once observed: "God is gentle and loves gentleness in every matter." On another occasion, the Prophet thus expressed the same idea: "God is gentle and loves gentleness. He grants to gentleness what he does not grant to harshness or to any other thing." Similarly there is another hadith to this effect: "One who is bereft of gentleness will be bereft of all goodness." (*Sahih, Muslim*)

Muslims should therefore never be short-tempered and should never raise their voices to others. The Quran says: "Be modest in your behaviour and lower your voice: "for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of a donkey." (31: 19)

Muslims should be polite in their interactions and dealings. They should be polite to parents, brothers, sisters, neighbours, teachers, elders, old people, friends and persons in need of help. Even if someone behaves rudely, one should not retaliate in the same manner.

In a contentious situation, if we treat people with haughtiness, it will aggravate the situation, hurt their egos and lead to the escalation of the



trouble. If, instead, we opt for gentle behaviour in our dealings, it will awaken peoples' consciences. Now the result will be quite the opposite. If earlier the person concerned was our opponent, he will now become our friend. Gentle behaviour turns even our direst enemies into friends. The Quran has this to say: "The good deed and evil deed cannot be equal. Requite the evil with good, then he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend." (41: 34)

In fact, the greatest weapon of a believer is to treat people well. Even if people are not good to him, he should be good to them. He should adopt the policy of avoidance in the face of provocation or irritating behaviour and instead exercise patience in all such situations. Every believer has the duty to seek the protection of God from such negative feelings, rather than act upon them.

The idea of doing good should proceed from sincere sympathy like that which is shown by one's nearest relatives: by a mother, for instance, towards her children. This is the highest and last stage of showing kindness to the creatures of God. Sympathetic and sincere benefactors are highly praised by the Lord in the Quran which says that the servants of God (whom He loves) are those who on account of their love for God bestow their food on the poor and needy and the orphan and the bondsman, though they love it themselves, and who say, "We do not confer any obligation upon you, but our desire is that God may be pleased with us and we do it only for the sake of God, and this is a service for which we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks." (76:8,9) The Quran further says, "God loves those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor niggardly and keep the golden mean." (25:67) This also applies to "those who give alms alike in prosperity and in adversity." (3:134) There is also the admonition that "you shall by no means attain goodness till you give in alms what you dearly cherish." (3:92); "and give your kindred what they require in time of need and also to the poor and the wayfarer". Believers are urged "not to squander their substance wastefully." (17:26)

In another verse God enjoins believers to "be good to parents and kindred and to the orphans and to the poor and to the neighbours who are your relatives and to the neighbours who are strangers and the companions on a journey and to the wayfarer and to your servant. "This is what God loves you to do. "He does not love the vain boasters and the selfish and does not like those who are niggardly themselves and bid others to be niggards, and hide away what God of His bounty has given them." (4:36,37).

You are all members of the
same family, bound by the
Religion of Love.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Chapter 6

RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT

Good conduct enjoys a place of the utmost importance in Islam, moral uplift being one of the main objects for which the Prophet was sent to the world. The Prophet once said:

“I have been sent down by God to teach moral virtues and to evolve them to the highest state of perfection.”

Importance

From the Traditions of the Prophet we can have an idea of the great degree of importance that Islam attaches to the cultivation of moral qualities.

“The best of you are those who are best in behaviour.”

(Al-Tirmidhi)

“On the Day of Recompense nearest to me will be one who possesses the best character.”

(Al-Tirmidhi)

“On the Day of Reckoning the most weighty item in the ‘Balance of Deeds’ will be good conduct.”

(Al-Tirmidhi)

Once a Companion asked the Prophet, “What is there that takes a Muslim to Paradise?” The Prophet replied, “Fear of God and good conduct.”

(Al-Tirmidhi)

The Prophet, again, is reported to have said, “A Muslim with good moral character receives the same reward as one who fasts throughout the day and spends his nights in prayer.”

(Al-Tirmidhi)

Bad Conduct

Conversely, the Prophet has warned us against the grievous consequences of bad conduct. He once said:

“An ill-mannered man who is immoral in his conduct shall not enter Paradise.”

“No sin is more detestable to God than bad conduct.”

Some More Important Virtues

Here are some virtues without which no one can hope to be a good Muslim.



Truthfulness

Such great importance has been attached to truthfulness in Islam that, in addition to invariably speaking the truth, a Muslim is exhorted to keep company only with those who are truthful. The Quran states:

“Believers! Fear God and stand with those who uphold the cause of truth”. (9:119)

Moreover, the Prophet says:

“He who wishes to love God and His Apostle, or wishes God and His Apostle to love him, must take care to talk nothing but the truth whenever he speaks.”

“Speak the truth even if you see your ruin or death in it for, surely, salvation and life lie alone in truth, and avoid falsehood even if it may hold out to you the promise of success and reward, for the end of falsehood is nothing but failure and frustration.”

Once the Prophet was asked, “What is the hallmark of the dwellers of Paradise?” The Prophet replied, “Truthfulness.”

Fulfilling Promises

It is also a part of truthfulness that, when a promise is made, it should be fulfilled. The Quran and the Traditions are very clear on this point. The Quran states:

“And fulfil (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).” (17:34)

“Fulfil the contracts which you have made.” (5:1)

And the Traditions say:

“He who does not fulfil promises made by him has no share in Faith.”

“Not to fulfil one’s promises is the special sign of the hypocrite.”

Trustworthiness

Closely allied to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness, on which Islam has also laid special emphasis. Here is what the Quran says:

“God commands you to hand back your trusts to those to whom they are due. (4:58)

And the Traditions say:

“People in whom there is no trustworthiness, in them there is, so to speak, no faith.”

“Do not look solely at anyone’s prayers and fasts to determine his spiritual excellence. You should also see that he is truthful when he speaks, restores honestly what he has received in trust



to whom it is due, and remains righteous in times of adversity and suffering.”

Justice

Justice is an integral part of Islamic ethics. We must practise it in all spheres of life. The Quran states:

“God enjoins justice and the doing of good”. (16:90)

In Islam we are commanded to be just and fair not only to our own people or co-religionists, but also to others, even if they be inimical to our lives, property or Faith. It is stated in the Quran:

“And let not the hatred of others for you make you swerve to wrong-doing or depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety.”

Here are some traditions:

“The most beloved of men in the sight of God, on the Day of Resurrection, and the nearest to Him, shall be the just leader; and the most hateful of men in the sight of God, on the Day of Resurrection, and the farthest removed from Him, shall be the tyrannical ruler.”

The Prophet is reported to have enquired one day from the Companions: “Do you know who will be the first to experience Divine Mercy on the Day of Requital?” The Companions replied, “God and His Apostle know best.” The Prophet then said, “They will be those who accept a trust when it is offered to them and restore it willingly to the rightful claimant when they are asked to do so, and who judge in respect of others exactly as they would in respect of themselves.”

Compassion and Forgiveness

To feel compassion for a fellow human being in distress, to bring him succour, and to pardon people are virtues that are very highly valued in Islam. Here are some relevant traditions:

“Show kindness, and kindness shall be shown to you; forgive, and you shall be forgiven.”

“God will show no mercy to those in whose hearts there is no feeling of kindness for others.”

“One who does not forgive the faults of others will not have His sins be forgiven by God.”

“God will have mercy upon those who are merciful. Treat kindly the dwellers of the earth, He who dwells in the heavens will treat you kindly.”

It is apparent from the last Tradition that our kindness and gentleness are not to be confined solely to our own people. We ought to be kind and compassionate towards friend and foe alike and to all the creatures that



exist on the earth.

It is reported by the Prophet that once a person who was travelling by road saw a dog licking wet earth in the agony of thirst. The traveller was so moved by the spectacle that he gave water to the dog to drink. This simple service of the man to the thirsty dog pleased God so much that he was granted salvation by God.

Tenderness

Tenderness in one's dealings and activities and the readiness to oblige and put others at ease are all virtues of the highest order in the Islamic pattern of morality. Here are two traditions of the Prophet in this regard:

"Hell's fire is forbidden for those who are mild and gentle and who make it easy for others to deal with them."

"God is compassionate and likes compassion in His creatures.

He grants more to the kind and the tender-hearted than to those who are harsh and severe."

Self-Restraint

Tolerance, self-restraint, and the ability to control one's temper and overlook what is unpleasant and disagreeable are qualities that Islam wants everyone to cultivate. Believers who possess these fine moral attributes hold a very high place in the estimation of God.

The Quran mentions the blessed ones who are destined for Paradise:

"Who restrain their anger and pardon their fellowmen."

(3:134)

The Prophet says:

"God will withhold His punishment from one who curbs his anger."

Gentleness of Speech

Gentleness of speech is a great virtue in Islam while rudeness is a sin. The Quran declares:

"Speak kindly to mankind." (2:83)

We have it from the Prophet that "to speak politely is piety and a kind of charity."

"To indulge in intemperate language and in harsh behaviour is to perpetrate an injustice and the home of injustice is Hell."

Humility

Islam wants its followers to practice humility. It does not become a Muslim to be haughty and vainglorious.

Those who practise humility are great in the eyes of God. In the words of the Quran:



"The true servants of God the Most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility." (25:63)

"As for the Home of the Hereafter, We shall give to those who seek neither glory in this world nor evil". (28:83)

The Prophet once said:

"God will so exalt one who behaves humbly that, ultimately, he will attain the highest rank in Paradise."

Pride is so greatly repugnant to God that the Prophet has warned us against it again and again in such strong words as these:

"Whoever has pride in his heart, even of the weight of an atom, shall be cast headlong into Hell by God."

"Whoever has pride in his heart, even of the weight of a mustard seed, shall not enter Paradise."

"Beware of pride! Pride was the sin which first of all ruined the Devil."

Social Service

All the teachings of Islam are based on two basic principles — worship of God and service of men. Without putting both of the principles into practice, there can be no true fulfillment of one's religious duties.

In its followers, Islam inculcates the spirit of love and respect for all human beings. By serving human beings on the one hand, they please their God, and on the other they achieve spiritual progress for themselves.

According to a *hadith*, you should be Merciful to people on earth and God on high will be merciful to you. In this way Islam links personal salvation to serving others. One can receive God's reward in the Hereafter only if one has done something to alleviate the sufferings of mankind.

According to a *hadith*, Doomsday, God will say to a person, "I was ill, but you did not come to nurse Me." The man will reply, "God, You being the Lord of the universe, how can You be ill?" God will answer, "Such and such servant of Mine was ill. Had you gone there, you would have found Me there with him." Then God will say to another person, "I was hungry, but you did not feed Me." The person will reply, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You go hungry?" God will say, "Such and such of my servants came to you, but you did not feed him. Had you done so, you would have found Me with him." Then God will say to yet another man, "I was thirsty, and you did not give Me water to drink." That person will also say, "God, You are the Lord of the worlds, how could You be thirsty?" God will say, "Such and such servant of Mine came to you, but you did not give him water to drink. Had you offered him water, you would have found Me there with him."

From this, we learn the Islamic principle that if someone wants to find



God, he shall first have to make himself deserving of this by helping the poor and the needy. This act becomes a means of spiritual progress for him. And there is no doubt about it that it is only those people who have elevated themselves spiritually, who will find God.

This culture of mercy and compassion approved of by God is not limited to human beings, but extends also to the animal world. We must be equally sympathetic to animals. The Hadith gives us many guidelines on how to look after animals and treat them with fairness. These are duties laid down by God. One who is cruel to animals risks depriving himself of God's mercy.

Good Conduct

Strong moral fibre is the sum of all personal virtues that guarantee correct and agreeable behaviour in daily social interaction. A person of good character will invariably conform in his behaviour to a strict code of ethics.

What should be the underlying principle of this code of ethics? According to a hadith, one should like for others what one likes for oneself, that is, one should treat others just as one would want to be treated by others.

Everyone likes to be treated gently and greeted with pleasing words. So everyone should speak gently to others. Everyone wants his existence to be problem-free, so he should avoid creating problems for others. Everyone wants others to deal with him in a sympathetic and cooperative manner. So what everyone ought to do while dealing with others is to give them his full sympathy and cooperation.

This standard of ethics is very simple and natural. It is so simple that anyone may easily learn it, be he literate or illiterate, able-bodied or disabled, and regardless of his likes and dislikes. This hadith has given such a criterion for human ethics that no one can find it difficult to understand. In this way Islam has set forth, in the light of everyone's personal experience, what behaviour may be indulged in and what behaviour has to be refrained from.

According to another hadith, the best of us is one who is best in moral character. Accordingly, becoming a good human being has nothing ambiguous about it. Its simple formula is that of avoidance of double standards. One who lives his life by this formula is indubitably a person of the highest moral character.



Chapter 7

PEACE

The very word 'Islam' (from the Arabic *Silm*) connotes peace. According to a tradition of the Prophet, 'Peace is Islam' (Al-Bukhari). Similarly, a hadith states: A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands people are safe.' One of the attributes of God described in the Quran is 'As Salaam', which means "peace and security". That is to say that God's Being itself is a manifestation or embodiment of peace. According to another tradition of the Prophet, recorded by Bukhari, 'God is Peace'. In the Quran divine guidance is likened to the paths of peace. (5:16)

According to Islam, Paradise is the ideal human abode, and is thus called the 'Home of Peace.' (10:25) It is also said that the people of Paradise will wish peace to one another, indicating that the social culture of the people of Paradise will be based on peace.

According to a hadith, "God grants to gentleness what He does not grant to harshness." That is to say, peaceful activism is distinctly superior to violent activism.

The Quran states that, 'reconciliation is best' (4:128). God has decreed that success will be met with only on a reconciliatory path, and not on a confrontational or a violent course of action.

The Quran is undoubtedly a book of peace. It is not a book of war and violence. This can be judged from the fact that all of the Quran's pronouncements are directly or indirectly related to peace. Its opening invocation is: "In the name of God, the Most beneficent, the Most Merciful" and this verse has been repeated in the Quran no less than 114 times. This is an indication that the greatest attribute of the Supreme Being who sent this book to mankind is mercy. Indeed, the theme of this entire holy book is God's all-embracing compassion.

No Extremism

In the fourth chapter of the Quran the following injunction has been given:

"Do not go to excess in your religion." (4:171)

The same point has been made in a hadith. The Prophet of Islam observed:

"You should restrain yourselves from committing excesses (*ghulu*) in religion. For it was due to their having gone to extremes in religion that the previous communities were destroyed." (Musnad Ahmad, 1/215, 347)



Ghulu means extremism. The way of extremism is wrong, whatever the circumstances, for it goes against the spirit of religion. Indeed, it is proneness to extremism which at times culminates in war and violence. Those who suffer from extremist tendencies remain dissatisfied with the path of moderation, since this strikes them as being far from the ideal. That is why they so easily incline towards violence, and are ever ready to open hostilities in the name of achieving their objectives.

Moderation, which is the opposite of extremism, is closely interlinked with peace. When people possess the virtue of moderation, they necessarily think in terms of peace and will engage in their struggle in a peaceful manner.

Killing one human being is like killing all mankind

The Quran states:

“If someone kills another person, unless it is in retaliation for someone else or for causing corruption on the earth, it is as if he had murdered all mankind.” (5:32)

Murder is a horrendous act. The killing of a human being is permissible only when the danger he poses to social peace has no other remedy. Killing a single person without proven justification is equal to killing all human beings. The difference between the two is only one of degree and not of nature. Killing one human being is just as horrendous as killing all human beings. Such a killing, without proper sanction, appears to be a simple matter. But such an act breaks all traditions of respect for life.

The above verse of the Quran shows the great importance of peace and security in Islam. If someone is unjustly killed, Islam demands that the whole of society should become so greatly agitated over this offence that it should work unitedly towards restoring a state of peace and security. It should be treated as a matter of the greatest of urgency, as if all of humanity were under attack.

Extinguishing the Fire of Violence

The Quran states:

“Each time they kindle the fire of war, God extinguishes it.” (5:64)

This verse of the Quran shows the creation plan of the Creator for this world — a plan based on the principle of peace. This means that whenever one of two opposing sides is intent on fuelling the fire of war, the other should attempt to extinguish it by resorting to some peaceful strategy, so that violence may be prevented from spreading. It should never happen that if one side indulges in violence, the other follows suit. The proper and most desirable way of leading one's life in this world is not to counter bombs with bombs, but rather to defuse them. And this should be done at the very outset. If we are imbued with the true spirit of Quranic teaching, we should realize that countering a bomb with another bomb is the way of Satan. On the contrary, the way approved of by God is to neutralize the bomb.



War only for defence

The Quran states:

“Permission to fight is given to those who are attacked because they have been wronged.” (22:39)

This is not just a Quranic injunction aimed at Islamic believers, but rather a statement of international law. The above verse clearly states that war is permissible only when, in order to counter open aggression, it is waged in self-defence. All other forms of war come under the heading of aggression. And aggressors have no lawful place in this world. According to this verse, there is no justification for any war other than a defensive one, when one fights under the compulsion to do so.

According to the Quran, even defensive war can be fought only after a formal declaration of war has been made, and then only by an established government (18:58). Non-governmental organisations have no right to wage war on any pretext. In view of these teachings, we can safely conclude that according to the laws of war stated in the Quran, all wars, except for a defensive war which has become unavoidable, are unlawful. For instance, guerrilla war, proxy war, undeclared war and aggressive war, all are undoubtedly unlawful in Islam.

Peace is something that can be opted for in all circumstances, whereas the decision to wage war should be taken only in times of emergencies for the purpose of defence, when it becomes inevitable, and that too at a time when all peaceful strategies for avoiding confrontation have failed.

As we know, the Quran is a book, an ideological book. It is not a gun or a sword. Therefore, ‘jihad’ by means of the Quran can only mean conveying the ideas of the Quran to the people.

The above-mentioned verse makes it clear that what is called jihad in Islam entails only the kind of peaceful struggle which has nothing to do with violence. The Arabic word ‘jihad’ is derived from the root ‘juhd’ which means to strive, to struggle, that is, to exert oneself to the utmost to achieve one’s goal. This is the original meaning of ‘jihad’ in Arabic.

Adhering to the truth with patience and perseverance

The Quran tells us that the kind of people who can save themselves from loss and achieve a successful life are those “who exhort each other to justice and to fortitude.” (103:3)

It is unfortunate that one who adheres to the path of truth himself, or calls upon people to accept the truth, is almost invariably rejected by the people. The resistance he has to face is very great. At such times what the lover of truth should do is exercise great patience. He should bear with fortitude all hardships, without trying to hold others responsible for it.

Patience is another name for the non-aggressive method. This means that one who stands up for the truth ought not to counter violence with



violence. He must unilaterally adhere to peaceful ways.

Adopting the Course of Reconciliation

During the times of the Prophet of Islam, as a result of the aggression of the Quraysh, his opponents, a state of war prevailed between the Quraysh and the Muslims. One of the commandments given in the Quran on this occasion was:

“And if they incline towards peace, you too incline to it, and put your trust in God. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. And if they intend to deceive you, then surely God is sufficient for you.” (8:61-62)

This verse of the Quran shows that peace is desirable in Islam to the greatest possible extent. Even if peace can be established only by incurring risks, this course should unhesitatingly be embarked upon in the way enjoined by the Quran. If reconciliatory offers are made by the antagonists in the course of the war, they should be accepted without delay. Even supposing that there is the fear of some deception being practised in the making of the offer of peace, this offer should nevertheless be accepted in the hope that God will always be on the side of the peace lovers and not on that of the deceivers.

Another reality is that, in this world, peace can be established only by those who have great courage. In the present world, problems inevitably arise between different groups, for no human situation is ever absolutely ideal. Everyone at some point in his life is faced with injustice and the misappropriation of what belongs to him by right. In these situations, only such individuals can establish peace who can rise above all considerations and disdain all pretexts to engage in violent retaliation. Only the truly courageous can establish peace in this world. Those who are lacking in courage will continue to fight, and will thus never allow the history of the world to be re-written in terms of blessed peace.

A Mercy for Mankind

The Quran has this to say of the Prophet of Islam:

“We have only sent you as a mercy to all mankind.” (21:106)

The advent of the Prophet of Islam made manifest God's mercy for all mankind. Through him God communicated those principles of life by opting for which man may inhabit the abode of eternal peace and security. (Dar as Salaam) (10:25). Through him, such teachings were revealed as would turn human society into a peaceful society. For the first time in history, the Prophet of Islam presented a complete ideology based on the concept of peace. He gave us the formula for the building of a healthy life, by shunning hatred and violence. Through him a revolution was set in motion, which made it possible to construct a peaceful society by avoiding war and confrontation.

Although the Prophet of Islam faced several battles, they were so brief that we might describe them as skirmishes rather than full-scale war. It



would be quite correct to say that the Prophet of Islam initiated a revolution which, although very great in its scope and repercussions, was nevertheless almost bloodless. He gave peace the status of a complete ideology or system of life. He impressed it upon his followers that violence was the way of destruction, while peace was the way of construction. He held patience to be the greatest form of worship, implying as it does adherence to the path of peace in the full sense of the word. He held disturbing the peaceful system of nature (*fasad*) to be the greatest crime.

The Prophet enjoined believers to greet one another by saying "Assalam-o-Alaikum". This shows that mutual relationships should be based on peace and security. The Prophet told the believers that success in the Hereafter should be the target of the human struggle. In this way he dispelled the notion that worldly progress should be one's aim in life, for that is what ultimately results in all kinds of confrontation and violence. His formula for better living was to make oneself useful to others, and if that was not possible, then at least to do others no harm; no one should be regarded as an enemy; even the enemy must be given fair treatment, for only then would the realization come that one's enemy was potentially one's friend: the 'enemy' always has it in him to be a friend.

Peace in all circumstances

The Prophet of Islam was a peace lover to the ultimate extent. His opponents repeatedly attempted to draw him into war, but on each occasion he avoided becoming entangled. However, sometimes in view of unilateral aggression, he had no option but to fight purely in self-defence, and for a limited duration. The battle of Badr is one such example.

History shows that at the exact moment when the armies of both sides were standing ready for battle, the Prophet was visited by Gabriel, God's angel. He said to the Prophet: "O Muhammad, God has sent you peace (salam)." On hearing this, the Prophet of Islam replied: "God is peace, peace is from Him and to Him is peace." (*Al Bidaya was al-Nihayah*, part III, p. 267).

This incident shows that even at such a juncture, the Prophet of Islam was a peace-lover. Even in that extremity, his mind was free from feelings of hatred and violence: he was thinking in terms of peace and security and his heart throbbed with the desire for these beneficent conditions to be established in the world with the succour of God. The true man is one who can think of peace even in times of war, whose heart is filled with feelings of peace and well-wishing, even during emergencies on the battlefield.

This is no ordinary matter. In reality, this serves as the highest example of positive thinking. As we know, war is the most negative of all events. The Prophet, who was at the helm of affairs, was on the brink of war, yet the words that came to his lips were those of peace and security rather than of war and violence. This is indicative of the highest human virtue. The noblest



human character is one who thinks of peace amidst violence and who can plan for reconciliation even in wartime.

Peaceful citizens

According to a hadith, the Prophet of Islam defined a believer thus:

A believer is one from whom people are safe as regards their lives and property. (At-Tirmizi, An-Nasai, Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad).

There are two ways of leading one's life in society. One is to live peacefully among one's fellow men. The other is to keep quarrelling with others. According to this hadith, the way of the faithful is to live as peaceful citizens in society. No one should pose any danger to others' lives, property or honour. In no circumstances, should one take the way of violence.

How should life be led so that the members of a society remain safe and secure from others' injustices? It is to maintain the way of moderation, irrespective of there being causes for complaint. All members of society should be able to bury their complaints in their own hearts instead of pouring them out upon others. A society in which such self control is exercised is one in which its members can enjoy a feeling of security. Indeed, a peaceful society is the ideal framework for positive human development. On the contrary, a society fraught with violence is an animal, not a human society. It can offer little hope of the realization of individual human potential.

The love of peace is a noble human virtue, whereas the love of violence brings the human being down from a high ethical plane to the level of brutishness.

No confrontation with the enemy

The Prophet of Islam once observed: "Do not wish for confrontation with the enemy, ask for peace from God." This means that if someone has become our enemy, we should not necessarily turn against him and start fighting with him. Despite his enmity, we should opt rather for avoidance of friction, so that conflict is effectively prevented.

'Ask for peace from God' means to adopt the way of peace instead of confrontation and secure God's succour for peaceful activities. A believer should not pray to God thus: "O God, destroy the enemy." Rather his prayer should be: "O God, help me to stay away from the path of violence and confrontation, in spite of the enmity of others, and help me to pursue the journey of my life along the path of peace."

This shows that according to the plan of nature, peace in this world is the general rule, while violence is a temporary necessity. Furthermore, this tells us that if an individual or a group is our enemy, the way of confrontation is not the only way to solve the problem. A better and far more appropriate method is to neutralize enmity through a peaceful strategy. The power of peace is far more effective and far more useful than the power of violence. Peace is the only religion for both man and the universe.



Scholars have rightly defined peace as “the absence of war” However, there are some who hold that peace should necessarily be accompanied by justice. But setting such a condition for the attainment of peace is impractical. For the role of peace is purely to set the stage for us to strive for justice and to work towards other constructive ends. Peace without justice (Insaaf) can not last long.

The Prophet Muhammad provides a very clear example in his method of negotiating the Hudaibiyah peace treaty. By unilaterally accepting the conditions of his opponents, he concluded a historic 10-year no-war pact, without apparently receiving justice or his rights. But by means of this peace treaty, the Prophet and his companions were enabled to consolidate themselves so thoroughly that they had no need to wage war to attain justice.

Christ once said, “Love your enemy.” This means to be on peaceful terms with one’s enemy, i.e. winning over your enemy by using the power of peace. This is the divine formula to attain peace.

The religious viewpoint on this subject is very aptly conveyed in the Qur’an: “God calls to the Home of Peace.”(10:25) This means that according to the creation plan, peace and harmony should prevail in human society. God Himself is Peace (Peace being an attribute of God). He intended this world to be peaceful, and only a peaceful world will be able to receive His blessings.

A peaceful world is like a paradise on earth. It is only in such a world that we can meet and establish contact with God, the Creator of Man and the Universe.

No excuse, therefore, justifies the use of violence, in individual or national life. We must maintain peace unilaterally, for nothing that we desire can be achieved without it.

Although at opposite poles, peace and violence result from human thinking. And if one were to think of the end result, one would never indulge in violence. One should bear in mind that peace is in consonance with humanity, whereas violence means a descent to the animal level. Peaceful minds make for a peaceful world. Man was born in peace. Man must die in peace.

Peace—Positive Behaviour

Peace is a product of a positive mental attitude, while violence is the result of a negative thinking. Peace is the natural state of society: violence is an unnatural state. Peace is as much in accordance with nature’s plan as violence is against it. When peaceful conditions prevail in a society, all activities take place in their proper form. But if the atmosphere of peace is disturbed, the normal functioning of society is disrupted. This law applies to man, as well as to the entire universe. According to the scheme of nature, peace is the only secret of smooth functioning in human society as well as in the rest of the universe. Peace, therefore, is such a basic requirement of



man, that it is crucial to maintain it in all situations. Without peace there can be neither development nor progress. No excuse whatsoever justifies the use of violence, in individual or national life. Regardless of how unfavourable circumstances might be, an environment of peace is indispensable. We must maintain peace unilaterally, for nothing that we desire can be achieved without it.

If we fail to establish peace, then we must face destruction in every field of life. The option for us is not between peace and no peace, but between peace and annihilation. Without peace, there is no hope for the survival of mankind.

Peace—Man's Absolute Right

Peaceful revolution is the outcome of peaceful thinking. Peaceful minds make for a peaceful world. Man was born in peace. Man must die in peace. Peace—man's birthright—is God's greatest blessing for human beings. God will grant this right.

The person who is wedded to Truth and Love would need nothing more for peace and happiness. When creation is witnessed through these values, it becomes holy scripture, an inspiring lesson and guide.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Chapter 8

NON-VIOLENCE

A study of the Quran and Sunnah (Sayings and Doings of the Prophet) tells us that Islam is a religion which teaches non-violence. According to the Quran, God does not love violence (*fasad*). We learn from the Quran that *fasad* is that action which results in disruption of the social system, causing losses in terms of lives and property. This shows that God loves non-violence.

He abhors violent activity being indulged in human society, as a result of which people have to pay the price with their possessions and lives. This is supported by other statements in the Qur'an, for instance, that Peace is one of God's names (59:23). Those who seek to please God are assured by verse 5 of the sixteenth *surah* that they will be guided by Him to "the paths of peace." Paradise, which is the final destination of the society of God's choice, is referred to in the Qur'an as "the home of peace" (89:30), etc.

The entire spirit of the Qur'an is in consonance with this concept. For instance, the Qur'an attaches great importance to patience. In fact, patience is set above all other Islamic virtues — with the exceptional promise of reward beyond measure. (39:10)

Patience implies a peaceful response or reaction, whereas impatience implies a violent response. The word *sabr* exactly expresses the notion of non-violence as it is understood in modern times. That patient action is non-violent action has been clearly expressed in the Qur'an. According to one tradition, the Prophet Muhammad observed: God grants to *rifq* (gentleness) what he does not grant to *unf* (violence). (Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, 4/255)

The word *rifq* has been used in this *hadith* as an antithesis to *unf*. These terms convey exactly what is meant by violence and non-violence in present times. This *hadith* clearly indicates the superiority of the non-violent method.

God grants to non-violence what He does not grant to violence. This has very wide and deep implications, embodying an eternal law of nature. By the very law of nature all bad things are associated with violence, while all good things are associated with non-violence.

Violent activities breed hatred in society, while non-violent activities elicit love. Violence is the way of destruction while non-violence is the way of construction. In an atmosphere of violence, it is enmity which flourishes, while in an atmosphere of non-violence, it is friendship which flourishes. The method of violence gives way to negative values while the method of



non-violence is marked by positive values. The method of violence embroils people in problems, while the method of non-violence leads people to the exploiting of opportunities. In short, violence is death, non-violence is life.

Both the Qur'an and the *Hadith* have attached great importance to *jihad*. Jihad means 'struggle', i.e. to make the greatest possible effort.. This word is used in the Quran and Hadith for non-violent struggle as opposed to violent struggle. The Qur'an (25:52) says: Perform *jihad* with this (i.e. the words of the Qur'an) most strenuously.

The Qur'an is not a sword or a gun. It is a book of ideology. In such a case, performing *jihad* with the Qur'an would mean an ideological struggle to convey the peaceful message of Islam to people.

In the light of this verse of the Qur'an, *jihad* in actual fact is another name for peaceful activism or non-violent activism. Where *qital* is violent activism, *jihad* is non-violent activism.

The Prophet Muhammad followed the principle of peaceful activism throughout his life. He always adopted non-violent methods in preference to violent methods. It is this policy which was referred to by Aishah, the Prophet's wife, in these words: "Whenever the Prophet had to opt for one of two ways, he almost always opted for the easier one." (*Fath al-Bari*, 6/654)

1. According to the Qur'an there are two faculties in every human being which are mutually antipathetic. One is the ego, and the other is the conscience, called respectively *nafs ammara* and *nafs lawwama*. (Qur'an, 12:53; 75:26). What the violent method invariably does is to awaken the ego, which necessarily results in a breakdown of social equilibrium. On the other hand, non-violent activism awakens the conscience. From this results an awakening in people of introspection and self-appraisal. And according to the Qur'an, the miraculous outcome of this is that "he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend." (41:34)

2. A great advantage of the non-violent method is that, by following it, no part of one's time is wasted. The opportunities available in any given situation may then be exploited to the fullest extent—as happened after the no-war pact of Hudaibiyya. This peace treaty enabled the energies of the believers to be utilised in peaceful constructive activities instead of being dissipated in a futile armed encounter. One great harm done by violent activism is the breaking of social traditions in the launching of militant movements. Conversely, the great benefit that accrues from non-violent activism is that it can be initiated and prolonged with no damage to tradition.

Generally speaking, attempts to improve or replace existing systems by violent activism are counter-productive. The truly desirable revolution is that which permits gradual and beneficial changes. And this can be achieved only on the basis of non-violence.

The Prophet of Islam fully adopted the way of pacifism or non-violence



all his life. All his successes were achieved by non-violent methods. There were many such issues in Makkah at that time which could have been the subject of clash and confrontation. But the Prophet avoided all such issues, strictly limiting his sphere to peaceful propagation of his message.

In Makkah when the Quraysh leaders were set to wage war against the Prophet, even then, instead of opting for the way of reaction and retaliation, the Prophet secretly migrated to Madinah.

Migration (Hijra), by its very nature, was a clear example of non-violent activism. This peaceful strategy enabled the Prophet and his followers, about two hundred in number, to form a powerful centre of Islam in Madinah. Had they adopted the path of confrontation instead of peaceful migration, the history of Islam might have been buried right there in Makkah shortly after its inception.

A study of the Quran and Seerah (life of the Prophet) tells us that the actual goal of Islam has been, from beginning to end, to change people's hearts. But in accordance with the creation plan, everyone has been given total freedom. It was as a result of this freedom that certain people turned against the Prophet of Islam; some even went to the extent of taking up arms in order to put an end to his mission by force. It was in situations such as these that the Prophet and his companions had to resort to arms, temporarily, in self-defence. In this context, it would be correct to say that peace in Islam is the rule rather than the exception.

The Prophet Muhammad lived on this earth for 23 years after receiving prophethood. During these 23 years, the Quran was revealed at intervals and according to the circumstances. If this period is divided up under the headings of war and peace, we will find that one part of the Quran, covering a span of twenty years, relates to peaceful teachings on the subjects of faith, worship, ethics, justice, humanity, etc., whereas the verses relating to war were revealed during a period of only three years, when the believers were faced with armed aggression.

There are 114 chapters in the Quran, containing 6,666 verses in all. There are hardly 40 verses which relate directly or indirectly to war. This means that the verses dealing with war represent barely 0.6 per cent of the entire text.

This kind of difference can be found in the constitutions of every country as well as in all religious books. For instance, while the Bible enshrines many teachings on the subject of peace, it also includes this saying of Jesus Christ:

“I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”

Similarly, while the Bhagavad Gita holds forth at length on wisdom and ethics, it also contains passages where Krishna insists that Arjuna should go ahead and fight. Moreover, it is obvious that these injunctions in the



Bible and the Gita are intended to cover only exceptional cases.

One important aspect of Islam as regards its peace-loving policy is that it differentiates between the enemy and the aggressor.

According to the teachings of Islam, if a group unilaterally attacks, thus opening hostilities, war can, as a matter of necessity, be waged in self-defence. The Quran states: "Permission to fight is given to those who are attacked." (22:39)

But so far as engaging in combat with the enemy is concerned, the Quran does not allow military action just on account of enmity. There is a verse in the Quran which gives clear guidance in this regard: "And good and evil are not alike. Requite evil with what is best. Then truly he between whom and you there was enmity will become your dearest friend." (41 :34)

These verses teach us not to regard our enemies as objects of everlasting hostility, for a potential friend could be hiding in the guise of an enemy. Discover this friend and turn the potential into the actual. Then you will have no cause for complaint.

It is clear that there are two ways of settling an issue—one violent and one peaceful. When we compare the two, we find that in any controversial matter, opting for violence is the harder course while opting for non-violence is the easier. The general rule in Islam is that whenever there is any controversy, we have to choose to tread the path of peace rather than that of violence. In present times when freedom has been accepted as an irrevocable right of man, peaceful methods should invariably be adopted.

It would be appropriate to add here that, during the life of the Prophet, if certain wars of a limited duration took place, such engagement only reflected the conditions of those times. The wars that took place in the first half of the seventh century are explainable in terms of it being an age of religious coercion and religious persecution. The atmosphere of religious tolerance that prevails today was not to be found in those times, so that the opponents of monotheism, by initiating hostilities, forced the Prophet to fight. Today, religious tolerance has become an established right of every individual and every group. That is why the question of going to war to secure religious rights should simply never arise.

Constructive Islamic activities are possible only in a peaceful and normal atmosphere. The importance of peace in Islam is, therefore, so great that we are commanded to ensure peace by bearing with all kinds of unpleasant situations. Even when countering persecution by opponents, the ways of peace and avoidance must be adopted, and peace must at all costs be unilaterally maintained: that is an important principle of Islam. There is only one exception to this rule, and that is in the case of physical aggression by opponents.

The Prophet of Islam began his prophetic mission in ancient Mecca,



where he lived for a period of thirteen years after receiving his prophethood. During this period, his Meccan opponents repeatedly indulged in acts of persecution and violence. But the Prophet of Islam and his companions unilaterally tolerated all such acts of gross injustice. The emigration from Mecca to Medinah was also a form of tolerance and avoidance, resorted to by the Prophet in order to avoid clashing with his opponents.

One example of this avoidance of armed confrontation is that of the signing of the Hudaibiya peace treaty. When a pitched battle seemed imminent between the Prophet of Islam and his opponents, the Prophet successfully defused the situation by the initiation of peace negotiations which continued for two weeks. During these negotiations, which took place at Hudaibiya near Mecca, the Prophet of Islam found the other party clinging obstinately to its demands. Therefore, the Prophet unilaterally accepted all the conditions of the enemy in order to arrive at a peaceful conclusion.

The purpose of this pact was to end tensions between the two parties and to maintain a normal atmosphere in order that the work of peaceful reconstruction might be performed - the actual goal of the mission of Islam. Immediately after the conclusion of the Hudaibiya peace treaty, the atmosphere did return to normal and all the constructive activities of Islam were resumed in full force.

The present world is so structured that conflicts inevitably occur between individuals. On such occasions, Islam tells us not to allow the conflict to escalate to the point of a violent confrontation. The Quran calls this a policy of patience and avoidance. As a permanent principle, it says: "Reconciliation is best." (4: 128) That is, at the time of mutual conflict, reconciliation should be resorted to in order to end the conflict. This is for the simple reason that, by adopting the path of conciliation, we can find opportunities to prevent our energy from being wasted in confrontational actions and to devote all this energy to constructive activities. It is this advantage of a conciliatory course which the Prophet of Islam recommended to his followers thus: "You should not desire confrontation with the enemy, you should ask God for peace."

There is a verse in the Quran that says:

"Whenever they kindle the fire of war, Allah puts it out."

It was in this spirit of Islam that when the Prophet came into power in Medina he did not start waging war in order to force people to surrender to him. Instead, he negotiated with tribes all over Arabia and ultimately brought about unity among them with a series of peace treaties.

If we make an in-depth study of the teachings of Islam we find that Islam wants to root out all those factors which lead to war. Why is a war waged? There are two main causes. One, to attempt to annihilate the enemy. Second, to attempt to gain political power. In the achievement of either of these goals, there is no justification in Islam



With regard to the enemy, Islam teaches us to try to eliminate enmity
— not the enemy.

According to the Quran, no enemy is everlastingly hostile. For in every enemy there lies a potential friend. Therefore, what the believer ought to do is to reach out through unilateral good behaviour to the man hidden within. By requiting good for evil, he should convert this enemy into a friend.

The Prophet of Islam was born in Mecca in 570 A.D. He received prophethood in 610 and lived as a Prophet in this world for 23 years. During this 23-year period, he spent the first 13 years in Mecca and the last 10 years in Medinah. Some verses of the Quran were revealed in Mecca and some verses were revealed in Medinah. Now, what were his activities during this prophetic period?

He taught people by reciting verses of the Quran which said: 'Read in the name of your Lord...' and other such verses which were peaceful teachings, being non-militant in nature and ethical in value. He taught people how to pray, and to practice patience and tolerance even in the face of oppression, and thus avoid conflict.

He was a role model in that he showed that it was possible for a human being to work for the well-being of others without any ill-feeling, in spite of highly provocative circumstances.

All the tasks performed by the Prophet throughout his life were marked by the greatness which comes from always choosing a non-violent course of action. Setting this kind of example formed the greater part for the Prophet's actual mission. And so far as war and violence are concerned, the jurists have characterized them as not being for the sake of Islam but as being contingent upon exceptional circumstances

Action with love is right conduct.
Speak with love and it becomes
truth. Thinking with love results in
peace. Understanding with love
leads to non-violence. For everything
love is primary. Where there is love
there is no place for hatred.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

The concept of human values is by its very nature universal. That is why we find uniformity in the teachings on human values in all religions. If there are any differences on this subject, they relate to points of reference, i.e. to religious books, rather than to the human values themselves.

The religious system of Islam rests upon the basic teaching of *Tauhid*. This is expressed in the phrase, *Allah-u-Akbar*, which Muslims utter about 300 times daily in the course of their prayers. *Allah-u-Akbar* means 'God is great'. One important idea inherent in this accolade to the Almighty is the equality of human beings. If we derive a maxim from this, it will be: "God is great and all men and women are equal".

The concept of egalitarianism is the real basis of human values in Islam. It means that all human beings are equal and that the entire population of the world is like one great family, every individual being an equal member of that family.

Subscribing to the notion of equality means looking upon everyone as being exactly the same as oneself. Such an appreciation of the human condition fosters a culture of amity. People become one another's well-wishers and have an earnest desire to live with others in peace. They are, above all, true to one another. This ensues from their conscience acting as an internal reminder which unfailingly cautions them not to deceive others by telling lies; it urges them always to speak the truth, so that others may trust them. Human equality is thus the bedrock of all virtues, and as such, generates all the desired values, while the concept of morality is like a tree trunk with all the social virtues springing from it like branches.

A society composed of a large number of people who are possessed of such a moral character becomes a healthy society in every sense. Such a society is marked by an unassailable integrity, the backbone of which is honesty and truthfulness. Such is the essence both of this book and of the moral system of Islam.





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GLOSSARY

Hadith: are oral traditions relating to the words and deeds of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Hadith collections are regarded as important tools for determining the Sunnah, or Muslim way of life, by all traditional schools of jurisprudence.

Hijrah:- The Hijra or withdrawal, is the migration of Muhammad and his followers to the city of Medina in 622.

Jihad: Jihad means “strive” or “struggle”. Jihad requires Muslims to “struggle in the way of God” or “to struggle to improve one’s self and/or society.

Makkans:- Native of Makkah

Quraysh:- Quraysh was the dominant tribe of Mecca upon the appearance of the religion of Islam. It was the tribe to which the Islamic Prophet Muhammad belonged.

Rahmat:- Mercy

Ramadan:- Ramadan is a month in the Islamic calendar that has been specifically designated for greater religious adherence and reflection.

Sabr:- Patience

Seerah:- a path a person takes during his lifetime. It also means conduct, comportment, demeanor, behavior, way of life, attitude, position, reaction, way of acting, and biography.

Semites:- A group of peoples closely related in language, whose habitat is Asia and partly Africa.

Surah:- An Arabic term literally meaning “something enclosed or surrounded by a fence or wall.” The term is commonly used to mean a “chapter” of the Qur’an, each of which is traditionally ordered roughly in order of decreasing length.

Umrah:- is a pilgrimage to Mecca performed by Muslims that can be undertaken at any time of the year. ‘Umrah involves only the rites of Tawaf and Sa’i with ihram; whereas Hajj involves staying in Mina, performing the rite of *wuquf* (standing) in the plains of ‘Arafat, staying in Muzdalifah, and pelting the stone pillars, as well as sacrifice in some cases. ‘Umrah, however, does not involve any of these.



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Dr. Farida Khanam is a well-known writer and translator. Having received a Master's Degree in English and Islamic Studies, she went on to complete her Doctorate on the topic of 'An Analysis of Religio-Political thoughts of Syed Abul Ala Maududi, a 20th century Islamic scholar and founder of Jama'at Islami'. She has been involved for the past two and a half decades in writing and translating books. She is the Chairperson of CPS International, Centre for Peace and Spirituality, an organization founded by the Islamic Scholar, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. She has been involved in his mission of peace and spirituality for many years and is the foremost in understanding his ideology. She is a regular contributor of articles to newspapers and presents the true teachings of Islam to the world through lectures, television, etc. She has received a memento by Delhi Women's League on the occasion of Women's Day Celebrations, 1995, to felicitate her as a women achiever.

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